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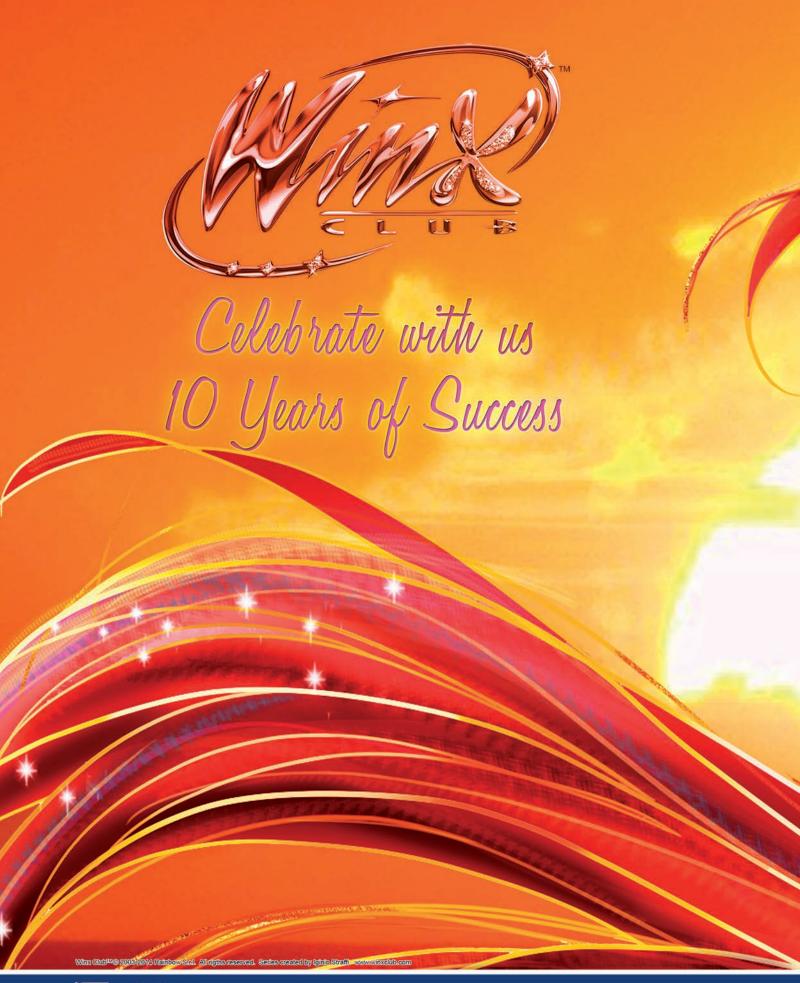


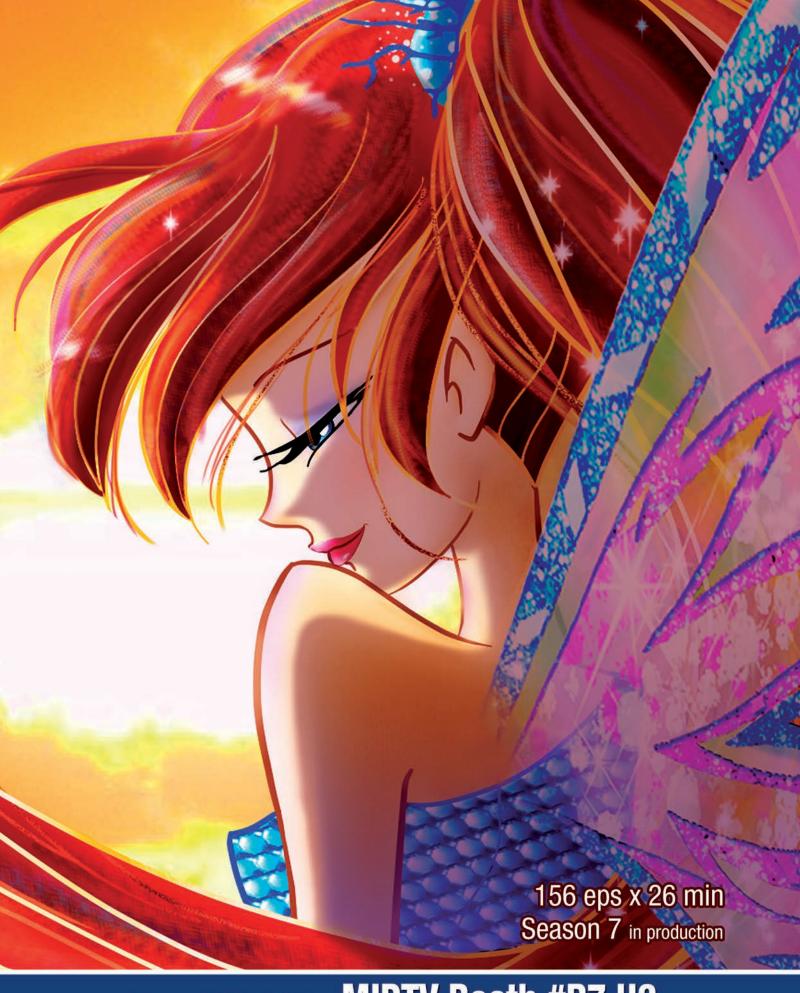
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**Cover** Our cover features an ad for new CGI series Talking Tom and Friends from BRB Internacional and Outfit7, while our inside editorial cover sports an image from GO-N's new animated comedy Zip Zip.



#### **Editorial**

### Free to be

What do apps Minecraft and Toca Hair Salon and physical toys Rainbow Loom and Lego have in common? Three are Scandinavian in origin, but one is not. So, that's not it... As for their commonality, all four products are not only global bestsellers right now, but they also make children the architects of their own play experiences.



Kids can do as they please with these playthings—and the stellar sales these brands keep racking up attest to the fact that they may be onto something. In fact, I think this is just the tip

of the iceberg, when it comes to tapping the market potential of free-form play.

At Kidscreen sister brand iKids' conference, held the day after Kidscreen Summit in February, bestselling app maker Toca Boca's creative director Jens Peter de Pedro espoused the idea of freedom in play. He didn't advocate anarchy, but instead promoted more of an organized freedom revolving around carefully designing systems and experiences that trust children's capabilities and provide them with the opportunity to act freely while playing within a product's established parameters.

The thing is, such products are not new. Play-Doh, launched in the 1950s, is arguably one of the original free-form toys—it's a no-fail experience, where kids are only really limited by their imaginations when it comes to playing with the bestselling compound. But as the moral panic around kids' inactivity and growing screen time continues to spread—founded or not—parents are increasingly looking for no-tech or enriching digital solutions (see Minecraft).

On the low-tech side, as Kidscreen reported in February, Rainbow Loom has been a breakout hit, selling millions of units in North America over the past six months. With colored elastics and a peg board, kids are weaving bracelets, charms, hats—you name it. And in this month's issue, Senior Writer Gary Rusak takes a look at the mini-boom in sand-play products ("Getting Gritty," p.39). Yep, sand (regular and kinetic) is on a sales streak because it gives kids an unfettered play experience.

Even toy giant Mattel is looking to make inroads into this type of play with the recent acquisition of Mega Brands ("The List," p.13). Both of Mega's core lines, construction toy and arts & craft products, engender open-ended creativity. Moreover, both of those categories are growing in sales, at a time when much of the traditional toy market is shrinking. I'm just saying.

Cheers. Lana

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#### Mattel builds construction plan

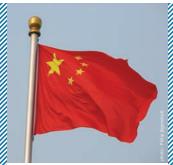
El-Segundo, California-based toy giant Mattel acquired Montreal, Canada's Mega Brands for a reported US\$460 million in late February. The strategic move will give Mattel, currently the world's biggest toyco, a heavy stake in the US\$4-billion construction-toy market. Mega Brands currently claims 10% of the ever-growing, high-margin category (on the back of its popular Mega Bloks product line). It's still a far cry from market-leader Lego's 75% stranglehold, but in an otherwise declining market—where Mattel flagship brand Barbie's sales fell by 6% in 2013—the building set category grew by 24% in 2012 and by 1% last year. Can Mattel build on Mega's current market share? Experts expect the toyco to use the new play-pattern player to leverage its many blue-chip brands including Hot Wheels and Fisher-Price and to bring construction products to Monster High, its fastest growing IP. Mattel is expected to keep Mega's head office in Montreal and maintain its 1,700 employees in 17 different countries.





#### **2**Broadband power struggle

With final FCC approval on Comcast's US\$45-billion acquisition of Time Warner Cable still months away, discussions around how the proposed mega-deal will affect kids content suppliers like Disney and SVODs like Netflix continue to heat up. If passed, the deal would effectively give the new company control of 30% of all US pay-TV subscribers and 33% of internet broadband subscribers, as well as the ability to pay the lowest prices for content—not great news for content suppliers of any stripe.



#### 3 Next-gen film distribution

A new L.A.-based startup movie studio, led by producer Robert Simonds Jr., is looking to take on its biggest rivals in Hollywood by making cheaper \$40-million movies with big-name stars, lining up guaranteed screen timeslots and zeroing in on the world's fastest-growing movie market—China. However, the yet-to-be-named studio's newest partner in China is Shanghai Media Group, which also just paired up with Disney to make Chinese co-pros. That doesn't throw a wrench into the plan at all, we're sure.



#### A Netflix eyes Euro growth

SVOD service Netflix has enjoyed a 140% bump in stock price in the past 12 months and is looking to expand its reach throughout Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania. Currently, the service has its greatest penetration in the US. Reportedly, Europe is on deck for mass-expansion later this year. Interestingly, in Q3 2013, Netflix registered more international subscribers than US ones for the first time since its launch in the UK and Ireland in July 2012.



#### Taking the lead?

Apps inspiring TV series have become commonplace. But mobile hardware developer Fuhu is taking things a step further by creating a show that stars an actual tablet, which may be a first for kids TV. Broadcaster BabyFirst is now airing the original series Albert & Junior—where Junior is modeled after Fuhu's nabi kids tablet brand. Talk about tapping into your resources.

To keep up with the news as it happens, check out **Kidscreen.com** daily.



As a child, Mike **Moon** split his interests between art, circus performing and magic. Despite honing some sweet unicycle skills, he eventually chose a career in animation. Now at Disney and a CalArts teacher, he couldn't be more inspired.

## From artist to mentor

**The gig** VP of creative for Disney Television Animation, working on original series development, as well as current animated series for both Disney Channel and Disney XD.

**Hocus pocus** One of the things people might not know about Moon is that his early desire to join the circus and become a magician was more than just a fleeting notion. His first job was at a local magic store in sleepy Simi Valley, California, where he grew up. "I would do odd jobs and because I was underage they would pay me in magic lessons and juggling equipment," says Moon. "I spent a lot of my youth riding a unicycle, juggling, and studying magic." He also spent a lot of time visiting a local oil painting studio and obsessing over Disney films and Saturday morning cartoons from the likes of Warner Bros., Hanna-Barbera and MGM.

After countless family trips to Disneyland that started at the age of seven, and realizing that animators could have viable careers, Moon found his calling and never looked back.

**Timing is everything** Moon's formal education in animation began in the early '80s after a chance encounter with the animation program director at CalArts, the late Bob Winquist. During his senior year, Moon drove to CalArts to look into the school and randomly bumped into Winquist who ended up accepting him into the program over lunch the same day, eventually becoming his mentor. "He was the one who inspired all of us. He left us with the feeling that there was nothing we couldn't do in this business," says Moon.

**Down to work** Moon began his professional career at indie animation company Klasky Csupo as a layout artist on *The Simpsons* before taking jobs with Warner Bros. Animation, Hanna-Barbera, Nickelodeon, Fox Animation and Cartoon Network. He eventually landed at Disney in 2006 as VP of animation development and was bumped up to his current role

in 2009. With career credits including Mickey's Mouseworks, Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends, The Powerpuff Girls Movie, Clone High and Dexter's Laboratory, Moon says his current job is the best he's ever had. However, a particular moment in time at Hanna-Barbera in the early '90s ranks high on his list. "I worked in a delapidated trailer in the studio's parking lot creating pilots with a bunch of artists including Craig McCracken, Genndy Tartakovsky, Paul Rudish and Conrad Vernon. It was an amazing time because all of them have produced so much great animation over the last 20 years."



more managerial side of the business. "I had a lot of anxiety because I came from a purely artistic background, but getting the opportunity to work with so many more artists in a role that bridges so many areas ended up being great."

**Full circle** As Moon continues to work on Disney's current round of development projects, his latest side gig has taken him back to where it all began. "I'm fortunate to be teaching first-year design students at CalArts this year," he says. "Getting to be around all that new energy is hugely inspiring for me."—Jeremy Dickson



Moon hopes to shape more creative Disney series like the new Mickey Mouse shorts

## **Out** of **Office**

Tales from the frequent fliers club



#### David Hallam

Head of Development, The Foundation

#### 1. In my carry-on

You'll find a show bible and *The Bible*—to feed the mind and spirit. And the latest edition of *Kidscreen*...obviously.

#### 2. My go-to gadget

My Bose noise-cancelling headphones create a wonderful cocoon free from coughing, crying and engines.

#### 3. On the fly

The Jo Malone perfume shop at Heathrow T5 is the perfect place to offset days spent away from my darling wife.



#### 4. Preferred in-air tunes

I'm more of a movie person than music when flying.

#### 5. Best in-flight food

I once had a very nice meal on Qatar Airways, but sadly that's the only time I've flown with them.

#### 6. Best power-lunch

Restaurant L'Affable in Cannes, a hidden gem.

#### 7. Window or aisle?

Always window, I wanted to be a pilot as a kid and I still pretend I'm flying the plane. Sad, but true.





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## Short, funny and on the money?

## Brand-new digital platform **Cartoon Network Anything** could be kids' latest mobile pal

It's

quite telling that one of the most interesting developments to emerge from Cartoon Network's annual upfront presentation has very little to do with linear TV. In mid March, the network announced the launch of a new digital initiative called *Cartoon Network Anything*, a smartphone-only app that will feature funny 15-second bits of content when it launches later this year.

Cartoon Network fans, most of whom are in the six to 11 range, will be able to swipe through fast-paced games, activities, trivia and clips, all of which will be completely randomized. The strategy behind the potentially groundbreaking app, however, is much more systematic.

"The idea came from the fact that we are looking at what it means to be a TV network in a very different mobile landscape," says Chris Waldron, VP of Cartoon Network Digital. "We've been doing lots in mobile in terms of games and featuring shows with full episodes via TV Everywhere, but we also need to reinvent ourselves and make content that works best only on smartphones. We are a TV network, but what does that look like scaled down to a small device?"

Right now, Waldron contends it means remaining relatively open-ended, which speaks to the name of the app itself. Anything refers to the vast array of content that will appear on the mobile mini-network, which will be loaded with lots of activities and clips at launch time that are updated constantly.

"It's going to take a village in terms of adding content. And we are going to be looking for content from all divisions. Even though digital is the central hub for this, we are working with groups in the studio, marketing and consumer products divisions—all of which will contribute," says Waldron. He is confident that there's enough inspiration from within Cartoon Network to make the feed seem endless and maintain the key element of surprise for its swift-swiping users. The company will also benefit from user feedback, which will be collected after kids indicate whether or not they like a clip and/or activity. (However, no signups or personal accounts will be involved.)

Cartoon Network also stands to benefit from the inherent advertising opportunities contained in the Anything app.

"The goal is to find a way to use this as a native advertising platform, so the promotional content is fun and funny—just like the content in the app," says Waldron. Without elaborating on any further advertising details, Waldron says the notion of humor is crucial to the initiative's allure and staying power.

"All the research we do shows kids want funny. And they're getting mobile devices at a rapid pace, so we need to make sure we entertain them where they are." Waldron

adds that while the app targets kids, its activities and clips will be entertaining to older demos, too. "I imagine myself using it at the gas pump, swiping through 20 activities at one given time."

-Wendy Goldman Getzler



#### **Onthecircuit**

Notes for the industry travel diary

#### June 10-12

#### Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) Los Angeles, CA





#### **June 17-19**

#### Licensing International Expo Las Vegas, NV

say, electrifying—show floor.



www.licensingexpo.com

The biggest names and properties in the licensing industry congregate at this annual event, where attendees seek out new properties and brands, see the latest trends and initiate deals. This year's event, which draws more than 14,000 attendees, kicks off with a keynote from DreamWorks Animation CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg. Just remember, what happens in Vegas during this international expo, does not stay in Vegas.

#### July 22-24 Kidscreen East Qingdao, China kidscreeneast.com



Kidscreen and the China Animation Association have partnered to co-produce a brandnew event designed to bring kids entertainment executives from the East and West together for three days of professional networking and collaborative learning. Kidscreen East's multi-track conference program will feature popular event formats from Kidscreen's signature event—Kidscreen Summit—but with a regional focus and an emphasis on building business relationships and stimulating trade and dialogue. Qingdao, a thriving port city in Eastern Shandong province that has been shaped by a long history of international trade and is the perfect setting for this inaugural East-meets-West event.

A full listing of Industry Events is available at kidscreen.com/events



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#### **Hot**Stuff

## Firing on all cylinders

## Canada's **Frima Studio** expands from game development to TV production

Who Launched in 2003 as a small Québec City, Canadabased indie game developer, Frima Studio was founded by Steve Couture, Philippe Bégin and Christian Daigle. The three entrepreneurs had a vision to expand the service studio into a global multiplatform entertainment company. And to help turn their dream into a reality, Frima acquired console and mobile game company Humagade in 2008, the animation and special effects division of Studio Virtuel Concept (SVC) in 2011, and more recently, world-renowned Québec-based concept art studio Volta. With its new capabilities, 350 employees and a string of successful third-party partnerships (Activision, Hasbro, Disney, Nickelodeon, Warner Bros.) for kids brands such as Skylanders under its belt, Frima launched its first original preschool property CosmoCamp in 2012. It features a collection of interactive storybooks and award-winning mobile games and CosmoCamp is now poised to dive into full television production. In February, Frima sealed a deal with Canadian pubcasters Kids' CBC and French-language Radio-Canada to develop CosmoCamp into a 52 x 11-minute animated series for kids four to six.

**A new chapter** Frima VP of original IP Valerie Hénaire says the move into television is a milestone for the company. "Launching into TV is a natural progression and is very significant for the direction of Frima," Hénaire says.

Set in space, the series follows the planet-hopping adventures of two bears, Migo and Pandy, that use their problem-solving and creative skills to restore happiness to their galaxy. With development underway and a bible in the works, production on the TV series is expected to start in late 2014 with a planned fall 2015 delivery.

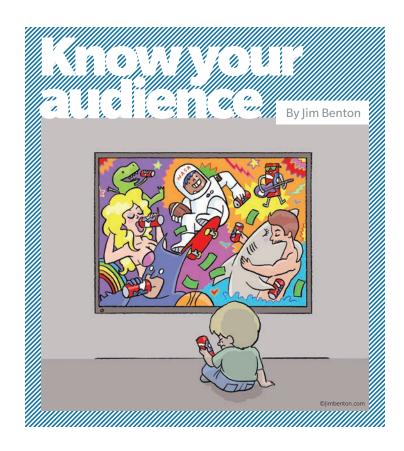
For the CosmoCamp apps, Frima collaborated with child development specialists at Québec City's Laval University to ensure the learning elements of the IP's universe were in step with preschoolers. Six CosmoCamp apps are currently available for iOS and Android mobile devices, and Frima plans to release five more throughout the year.

What's next As Frima continues to widen its production lens, it recently joined forces with Belgian comic book publisher Dupuis Edition (*Spirou*) to co-produce apps and a TV series for preschoolers based on popular French comic book *Little Furry*. The transmedia project was selected to pitch at Cartoon 360 in Munich, Germany, which took place last month. Hénaire says Frima also expects to develop more original television series and transmedia properties for kids, as well as co-produce with other companies.

-Jeremy Dickson



 $Frim a is heading into production on its first-ever original TV series, \textit{CosmoCamp}, with pubcaster CBC and \textit{CosmoCamp$ 



## **BEAUTIFUL** GENIUS **MODERN** INNOVATIVE JimHenson's" The all new pre-school television series from The Jim Henson Company invites children to have fun CREATING, BUILDING and WORKING together! 52 x 11' LET'S DO! dhx media (ImHenson MIPTV 2014 // Stand No. R7.E45, Riviera Hall international@henson.com 1.323.802.1500

After more than half a decade as Turner's Animation, Young Adults & Kids Media president and COO, Stuart **Snyder** exited the company at the end of March. Some of the accomplishments achieved under Snyder's watch include Adult Swim receiving its best ratings ever in 2013 and Cartoon Network launching its pro-social Stop Bullying: Speak Up campaign. He held earlier roles within Turner, including a stint as SVP and GM of GameTap, an early experiment in subscriber-based content delivered via broadband. Snyder's departure, which is amid continued management changes at Turner and parent company TBS, comes

will be responsible for all marketing and branding initiatives, including flagship AwesomenessTV properties, the Seventeen YouTube channel and MCN that is comanaged by Hearst, and any new ventures the company adds to its portfolio.

In other marketing news, Nickelodeon has named **Damon Burrell** as SVP of consumer marketing and advertising for Nickelodeon Group, where he will oversee consumer marketing and advertising, social media, CRM and data analytics for the network, as well as manage key property planning for Nickelodeon hits such as Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,

interests across the pond, as former HIT exec Paul Keech [B] joins the company's UK team as creative services director. Keech's appointment comes as DHX looks to step up its UK and global licensing strategies surrounding such properties as In the Night Garden and Teletubbies, both of which were part of DHX's acquisition of prodco Ragdoll this past September. Based in the company's London office, Keech will work closely with brand director Tor Bushell and UK commercial director Stephen Gould. He will be responsible for managing the creative direction and development of all creative assets on DHX brands that

recently a channel marketing and franchise consultant to Turner Broadcasting EMEA. Prior to that, she held a number of consultant and executive roles in senior marketing and brand management for companies including HIT Entertainment and Disney.

On the interactive front, UK-based digital entertainment developer Dubit has opened its first US office, which is headed up by former Moshi TV exec Brad Schultz. Schultz has been appointed VP of brand strategy and will oversee the growth of Dubit's LAbased production facilities and support the company's expanding US customer base, which now accounts

of Marathon. d'Halluin will temporarily head up the Paris-based animation company, with COO Ambroise Delorme and CCO Eryk Casemiro. After 15 years with Marathon, Michel did not specify his reason for leaving the company he co-founded with Chalvon-Demersay in 2001, eventually becoming GM in 2007. Four years later, he joined Zodiak Media's executive committee as SVP of group marketing.

Down under, former ABC Children's controller Tim Brooke-Hunt [D] has joined Studio 100 Group as advisor to the board, and the media company's Australian studio Flying Bark













as Cartoon Network gears up to launch a new portfolio of original web content and introduce ads to its 24-hour kidsnet Boomerang in the US.

Meanwhile, AwesomenessTV, the Dreamworks Animation-owned media company that develops and distributes content for teens and tweens, has tapped former Disney digital marketing exec T.J. Marchetti to lead branding initiatives as chief marketing officer. Marchetti most recently served as SVP of digital marketing at Disney, where he was part of the team that launched the new Disney Movies Anywhere streaming platform. He is also credited as being instrumental to Frozen's campaign strategy that had a big impact on the movie's success at the box office. At AwesomenessTV, Marchetti

SpongeBob SquarePants and Dora the Explorer. Before joining Nick, Burrell served as SVP of consumer marketing for MTV, where he developed multiplatform marketing programs. Burrell will likely cross paths with 10-year Nick veteran Audrey Diehl [A], who has been promoted to VP of animation development for Nickelodeon Group from her previous position as executive director of development. Her new responsibilities include providing development guidance for the kidnet's new animated series, talent sourcing, preand post-production supervision duties for animated pilots, as well as outreach efforts within the animation industry.

Canada-based DHX Media is bolstering its

are managed out the UK office. For the past six years, Keech has led the design department at HIT Brands/ Mattel as VP of creative services, where he oversaw the creative group during the transition from stop-frame to CGI on brands such as Thomas & Friends, Bob the Builder and Fireman Sam.

Another former HIT exec is taking on a new role. Lesley Bailey [C] is joining Turner Broadcasting in the newly created role of VP of channel marketing and brand management for EMEA. Based in London, Bailey will be tasked with leading channel marketing and brand management strategies for Turner's kids portfolio to help support revenue growth from licensing and merchandising, ratings and ad sales. Bailey was most for more than half of its business. At Dubit, Schultz will work with brands looking to extend their entertainment to children online, from initial research and business design through to digital production services.

Over in France, on the heels of Vincent Chalvon-Demersay's exit as CEO of Zodiak Media-owned Marathon Media in November, co-founder and general manager David Michel departed the company on March 31. The move follows an ongoing shake-up of top executives at Marathon Media, which saw Marc-Antoine d'Halluin replace Michel as Zodiak Media CEO in October and take over as temporary acting president and CEO

Productions has welcomed Brooke-Hunt as president of the board. Effective immediately, Brooke-Hunt will advise the group on its animation activities and will guide Flying Bark's future development. He will work closely with Jim Ballantine, who remains GM and executive producer of Flying Bark's TV and feature film projects. For six years, Brooke-Hunt was head of children's content for ABC TV and controller of channels ABC3 and ABC4Kids. He also had an eight-year stint as executive producer with Pacific Vision and Sticky Pictures, and he spent nine years as executive producer and director of Yoram Gross Studios (now Flying Bark Productions).

For more People Moves, head over to **kidscreen.com/category/people-moves** 



# ANIMATION FROM SPAIN >

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Kid-targeted dramas continue to play an important role for tweens and teens, who are increasingly demanding more in terms of storytelling and interactivity from the genre

BY JEREMY DICKSON

## High drama

or decades, core universal themes such as friendship, family, school, laughter, teamwork, being scared, feeling alone and finding yourself have been the lifeblood of television dramas for tweens and teens. And while the themes have remained consistent over time, what has changed in this mobile device-driven world are kids' expectations of the content and its delivery platforms.

"Because kids today can make more choices about what they are watching, it means they can stick with more complex stories, which they have been asking for," says Sarah Muller, UK pubcaster CBBC's head of acquisitions and drama development. "Having access to higher quality dramatic programming enables them to have their own water-cooler moments as adults do with popular shows like *House of Cards* and *Game of Thrones*," she adds. "If anything kids want more drama because they have seen it elsewhere."

Muller says the BBC sits in an envious position because part of its mandate is to create high-quality, thoughtful dramatic content that pays attention to detail for its audience. "Our kids drama now is as good as anything playing in the adult space; it's obviously just age-appropriate," says Muller. "This is increasingly important as we've become platform agnostic."

She points to BBC Worldwide's recent acquisition of Toronto, Canada-based Temple Street Productions' reality-style tween series *The Next Step* as a good example of how a youth drama can have legs and travel if it stays close to the heartbeat of its tween viewers.



#### **Multiple touchpoints**

The single-cam show created by Frank van Keeken (*Wingin' It*) was the top-ranked series this past fall for Family Channel across all specialty stations in Canada, and was also recently snapped up by Hulu (US), CBBC (UK), Disney Channel (Australia), Sky Italia and Hrvatska Televizija/HRT (Croatia).

Muller says the brand's interactive extensions—including an after-show web series that features character interviews, behind-the-scenes footage, commentary and an online dance mash-up tool that fans can use to create their own music videos—were big selling points for the broadcaster. "We are committing to it the same way we would commit to a top-line drama of our own," says Muller.

A few key things that make the show unique, according to Temple Street's senior director of scripted programming Laura Harbin, are its improvised nature and tween (as opposed to teen) target.

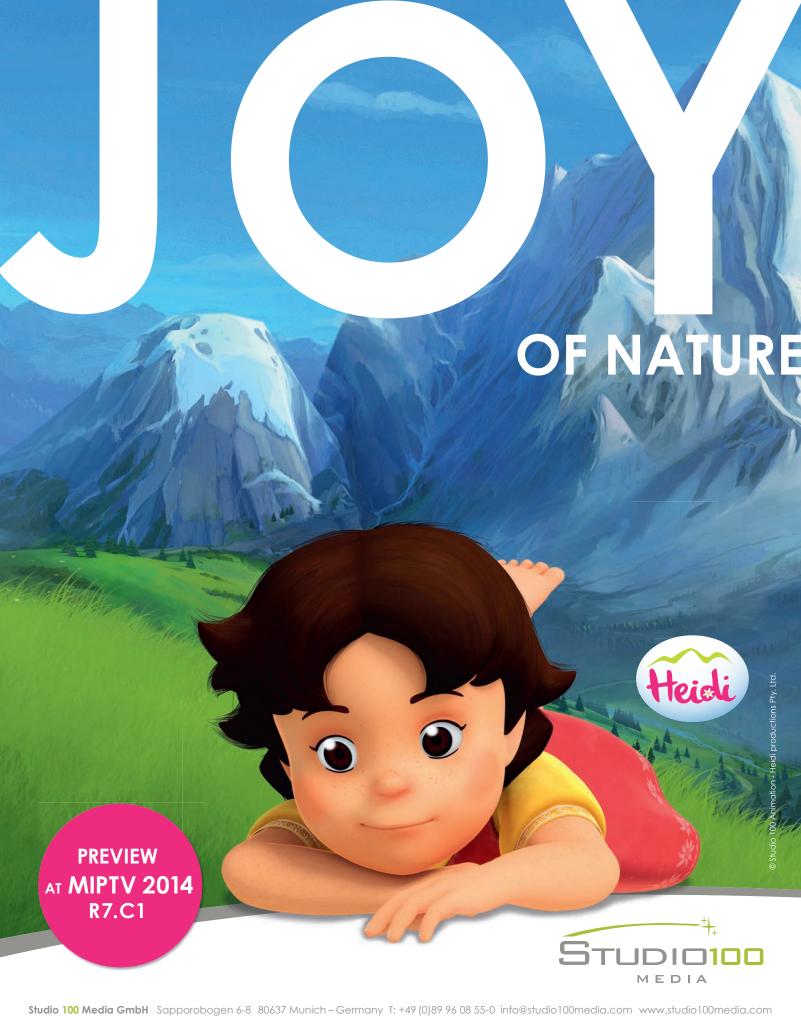
"A lot of the creation of the show happens on the fly. Instead of scripts with dialogue, we use outlines that explain what will happen in the scenes, then we let the actors come up with their own dialogue," says Harbin. "There is a real organic nature to the show which is different from comedies."

Addressing its serialized, cliffhanger format, Harbin says the show's recent sale to Hulu will work well for kids' current viewing habits. "A lot of kids comment that the show is too short—and it isn't—but they feel like it ends too soon. Now if they have Hulu, they will be able to binge."

CBBC has also been using the latest platform and social media tactics to its advantage in the drama space with its first-ever web-only dramedy *Dixi*. Addressing real-world web safety issues through a fictitious online social networking site, the Kindle Entertainment co-production launched in February as a series of 30 daily webisodes. They depict the story of a teenage girl who must uncover the mystery behind who hacked her social media profile.

With *Dixi* as a start, Muller says the BBC is committed to introducing interactive micro-storytelling elements to new dramas. "We're increasingly looking at how to tell stories that take advantage of an interactive, online or mobile platform. It's an incredibly high-concept, low-cost





way of bringing different types of storytelling to our audience," she says.

Whether CBBC is able to parlay *Dixi* into a global success remains to be seen, but the production further diversifies the channel's already robust lineup of hit dramas including new teen fantasy series *Wolf Blood* and upcoming 36 x 15-minute in-house production *World's End*.

#### **International flavor**

According to Nickelodeon International SVP of production and development Nina Hahn, there is no standard formula for finding worldwide success with youth drama—it works differently for every property. In the case of Nick's popular US/UK production, the soap-style mystery adventure series *House of Anubis*, extra attention was paid to cultural nuances and, of course, language.

"IPs like these have to speak to the whole world, so one of the biggest challenges is ensuring you have a global lingo and storyline that appeals to the viewer wherever they might be," says Hahn. "And how you produce is very culturally specific. For example, UK productions aren't used to having a writer on the floor while you are shooting, whereas the US is very used to that."

Sizing up interactive extensions for dramas, Hahn says it's not so much about how an IP is delivered, but more about how good it is. "It's less about the medium and more about the quality of what you are making and how on-brand it is for your end-user," she says.

With three seasons of *Anubis* on the market, Hahn says there are no immediate plans for a new season or more dramedies, but Nick is always on the lookout for strong, humor-based creator-driven content. "With the success of [US productions] *The Thundermans* and *The* 

Haunted Hathaways, those are big places to watch in terms of the live-action space," she says.

#### **Everybody wants something**

As Nick continues to focus on what it does best, the producers of the critically acclaimed, long-running Canadian teen drama *Degrassi* are preparing to serve up more of their special brand of teen angst. Now entering its 14th season with a total of 457 episodes produced since its 1980 debut, *Degrassi: The Next Generation* keeps rolling for co-creator and executive producer Linda Schuyler and her team at Toronto's Epitome Pictures.

She says one of the biggest challenges of an enduring series is the constant search for relevancy. "You have to stay true to your core message while also reflect the reality of the changing world that not only the kids are living in, but the broadcasters, too," Schuyler says.

#### "We're increasingly looking at how to tell stories that take advantage of an interactive, online or mobile platform."

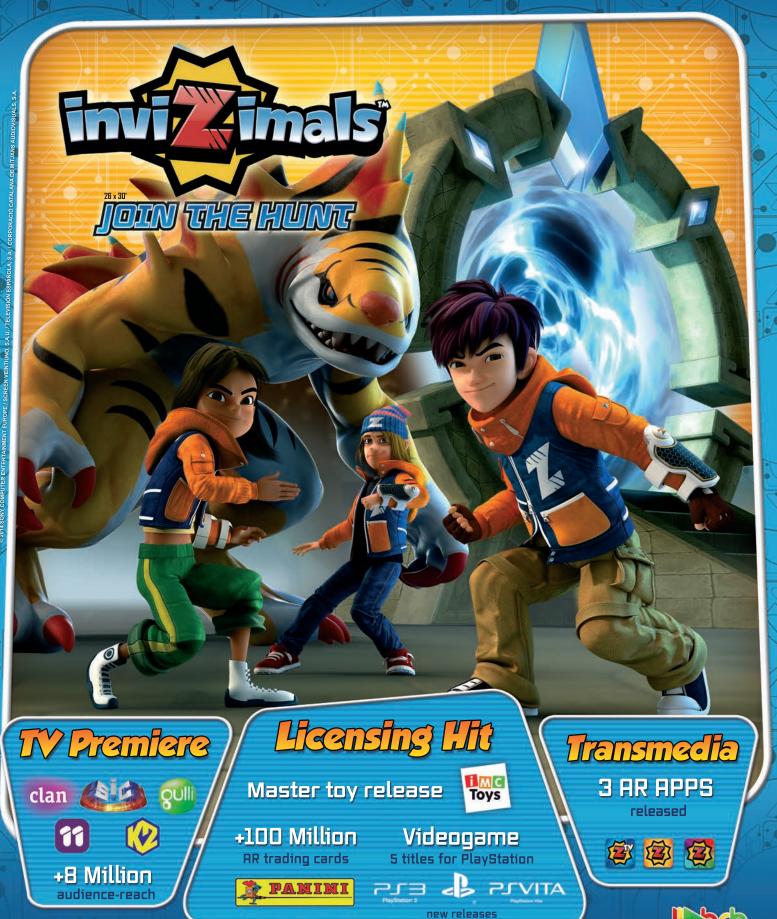
- Sarah Muller, CBBC

Currently airing on MTV (Canada), on TeenNick (US) and licensed to more than 140 international countries, *Degrassi's* ratings were up 27% over its last chapter among viewers ages 12 to 34 according to Canada's Bell Media as of February 11,.

Schuyler is particularly enthused that *Degrassi*'s after show, *After Degrassi*, continues to keep its young fans engaged. "It's another way MTV has taken a hard look at what we're doing and tried to find its own way to keep Degrassi fresh." (3)

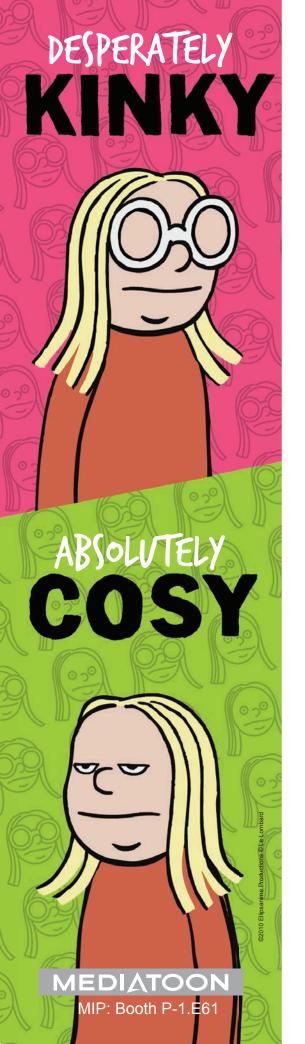


### An Augmented Reality TY Show











CHF Entertainment's new preschool series Pip Ahoy! is set to premiere on Channel 5's Milkshake! this fall

## Cosgrove Hall Fitzpatrick strengthens operations

With a new distribution arm, original content and funding, UK-based **CHF** is back in business

ooking to build upon its already good reputation in the UK, driven by Cosgrove Hall's classic animated series *Danger Mouse*, CHF Media Group launched its new commercial distribution, development and production arm CHF Rights last fall and has been steadily building the business since.

CHF Media Group originally formed in 2011 as a new company supported by private investors after Cosgrove Hall Productions was shut down by owner ITV in 2009. CHF Media Group then launched animation company Cosgrove Hall Fitzpatrick Entertainment under the leadership of creative director Brian Cosgrove, MD Simon Hall and president Francis Fitzpatrick.

With offices already in London and New York, the company moved into a new office in Manchester last fall and according to Fitzpatrick, it was able to hire more than 80 people—primarily as a result of the new UK tax credit, which went into effect on April 1,2013.

CHF Rights, led by industry veteran Brendan Kelly, is now leveraging CHF's full slate of in-house productions and acquired third-party content for potential worldwide broadcast, L&M and multiplatform opportunities.

It's also developing new IP to pitch to UK and US broadcasters. And the first of four new programs on the slate is  $Pip\ Ahoy!$ , a 52 x 11-minute 2D-animated preschool series. After raising US\$5 million through British government business expansion program EIF (Enterprise Investment Scheme), CHF plans to bring six episodes of the US\$8.3-million production to MIPTV before its expected premiere on Channel 5's Milkshake! block this September. The IP's licensing and merchandising program also kicked off at London's BLE in October.

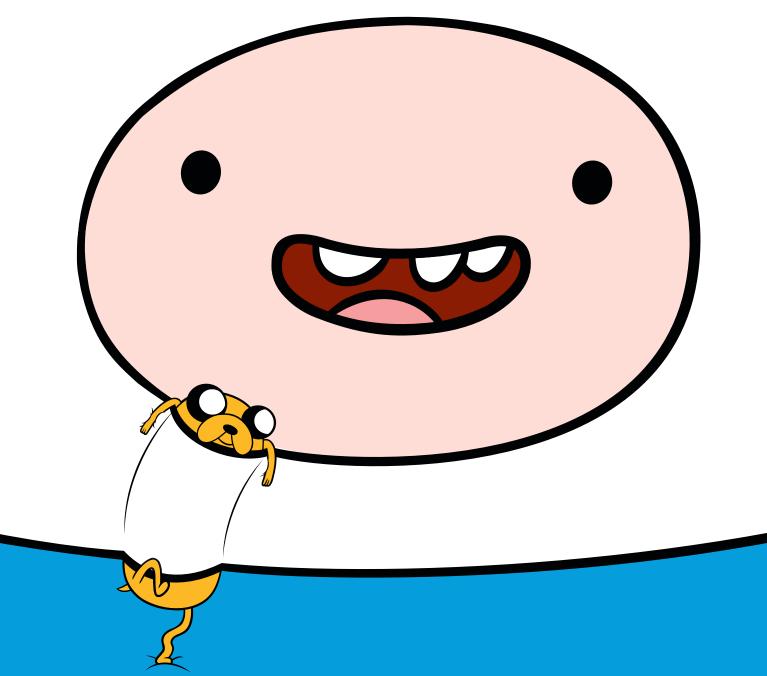
"Lisle International is already on-board [as our licensing agent] and we're confident of landing a master toy and master publishing deal before June," says Fitzpatrick.

CHF's second title is 52 x 11-minute action/adventure comedy *Hero Gliffix*, which follows the adventures of a group of crime-fighting dogs who live in a museum. Preproduction has wrapped and CiTV is expected to air the show for kids six to nine in September 2015.

Another new adventure/comedy series, also for the six-to-nine set, is *Horatio*. "It's in early development and the first bible and script will be ready for MIPTV," says Fitzpatrick. "We're talking to a couple of potential co-pro partners in Canada and Ireland and I'd be very surprised if we didn't have at least one in place in the next six months."

CHF is also looking for a broadcast partner for its 52 x seven-minute, 2D-animated preschool series  $PowWow\ Pando$ . The company is seeking US\$8.3 million in funding for all four properties.

He adds that the US is a major focus for CHF in 2014 and beyond. An expansion is currently planned for its New York office, where Fitzpatrick will eventually take a more permanent role. – Jeremy Dickson



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## **Meet Mooshku**

Irish animator Jason Tammemägi and his wife Méabh team to launch new children's media company

fter meeting on a job a number of years ago and collaborating on various projects since, Dublin, Ireland-based children's media specialist Jason Tammemägi and his wife Méabh Tammemägi, a producer, decided it was high time to combine their strengths and launch their own company.

The seeds for Mooshku were planted last June after Tammemägi left a 13-year stint as creative director of Geronimo Productions (formerly Monster Animation), where he created, wrote and directed hit preschool show *Fluffy Gardens* and worked on preschool shows *Planet Cosmo* and *Roobarb & Custard Too*.

"I've made a lot of children's television," says Tammemägi. "And Méabh is very active on the production side, and in things like positive parenting workshops, so we asked ourselves. 'What else can we do?""

With their goals for the company in order, the couple set to work to officially unveil Mooshku in February. Set up to offer fun, positive experiences, stories and activities across multiple platforms for kids, the new company develops and manages its own inhouse properties and also provides consulting, writing, script-editing and production services to third-parties developing kids content.

Its first project in development, 2D-animated preschool comedy *Millie and Mr. Fluff* was introduced at this past Kidscreen Summit and has so far received strong interest from CBeebies and RTE. The 52 x five-minute series follows the slapstick adventures of a little zookeeper and her tiger friend, a master of disguise that can stand in for any missing animal in the zoo.

Mooshku has received financial support from the Irish Film Board and is currently seeking potential co-production, distribution and broadcast partners.

The company is also deep in development on a new digital-based children's brand that will be announced in the coming months. Tammemägi says the IP will feature content designed to teach core life skills that will serve the next generation in adulthood. –Jeremy Dickson





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R9.A9 MARVISTA ENTERTAINMENT



## Committing to kids and families

Gulli will premiere Sonic Boom, the first TV series based on Sega's iconic Sonic the Hedgehog franchise, this fall

### Top-rated French net **Gulli** bolsters its lineup with big brands, animated preschool series and girl-skewing properties

The challenge When France's Independent Audiovisual Communication Authority (CSA) determined that the country needed a free kids TV channel to compete with its numerous generalist channels like TF1, French media company Lagardère Active knew it had a winning proposition in Gulli (originally Gulliver). As part of Lagardère's multiplex of youth and family channels, which now includes boy-targeting Canal J, preschool channel TiJi and seasonal popup The Santa Claus Channel, Gulli launched in November 2005 as the first freeto-air DTT channel dedicated to children. With Lagardère and its joint-venture partner France Télévisions owning 66% and 34% stakes in Gulli, respectfully, the channel evolved quickly. In 2010, it launched catch-up TV service Gulli Replay, and two years later it partnered with tech company Kurio to introduce what's touted as the first kid-friendly Android tablet in France. Online, gulli.fr has generated more than 12 million video views to date and the Gulli app has reached 1.2 million downloads. Now owned 100% by Lagardère Active (France Télévisions sold its stake last month), Gulli is looking to continue its run as one of France's leading kidnets by expanding further into animated preschool content, live-action series for girls, familyfriendly sitcoms and gender-neutral comedies.

The programming Gulli's current lineup consists of approximately 80% animation (35% is French animation) versus 20% live action. Original French programs make up about 15% of the schedule, while total original series account for 30%. Before Lagardère's current head of programming for youth and family channels, Caroline Cochaux, came on board in January 2013, Gulli skewed more to boys action in its before-school morning block. By September, Cochaux made a switch and launched the Gulli Doo preschool block featuring hit series such as Care Bears, My Little Pony and Tree Fu Tom. Searching for more balance,

Cochaux also decided to swap out some live-action family programming airing at lunchtime for girl-targeted animation. "After the amazing success of a girl power day that launched in 2012, we decided to introduce a special lunchtime girl-power block last October, featuring hit shows including Barbie Life in the Dreamhouse, Rosie, Atomic Betty, Monster High and Littlest Pet Shop," says Cochaux.

Later in the day on Wednesdays and weekends, boyskewing block Code Adventure offers major branded titles including Max Steel, Legends of Chima, Transformers Prime and Beyblade. For the after-school period, a "best of" block is programmed with animation, live-action and game shows for boys and girls of any age. Among the series headed to the block this year are Pac-Man, Inazuma Eleven, Monster Buster Club, Victorious, Merlin and family game show In the Box. "Into the evening, shows like Merlin and Tahiti Quest can get parents and older kids to watch together. Our studies also show that grandparents watch Gulli so we recently ran a special musical night featuring classic films such as A Star is Born, The King and I and My Fair Lady," says Cochaux. She adds that the channel's top performers include many big brands such as Monster High, Power Rangers and Max Steel.

Next up As a co-producer, Gulli is set to debut Sonic Boom, the first CGI-animated TV series based on Sega's iconic Sonic the Hedgehog gaming franchise, this fall. It's also readying animated series Hubert and Takako, a co-production with Canal J and Canal+. "We are looking for major brands for children inspired by mythology, novels, real characters, toys and new versions of cult animated series—provided they are popular with kids," says Cochaux. She adds that the biggest challenge is finding content for the four to 10 set. "Kids in this age group are very different. The youngest will progress, but the oldest will regress."—Jeremy Dickson











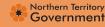






Screen Queensland









#### **Matt Hatter roars into India**

Platinum Films sews up a three-season deal with Cartoon Network and master toy partner Simba for the boy-skewing series

-based Platinum Films' CGI series *Matt Hatter Chronicles* is heading to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, thanks to a new three-season deal with Cartoon Network. Seasons one and two of the hit series will premiere across the five regions over the summer, before the brand-new third season debuts later this year.

To support the airdates at retail, the property's master toy partner Simba Dickie Group (EMEA, India and Russia) will unveil a new toy range for boys ages five to 10 that incorporates interlocking SKUs and interactive 3D features. Role-play, vehicles and action figures are set to roll out first this year, followed by interactive toys and collectibles. And Simba will utilize its network of 23 retail stores across 16 cities in India. The toyco also has plans to launch another 30 stores by December 2014.

Licensing agent Dream Theatre has signed on to handle a multi-category licensing program, a consumer marketing campaign and potential cross-media retail opportunities for the IP.

Platinum has also tapped Bangalore, India-based CGI animation house Xentrix Studios to take over work on the IP from Toronto, Canada-based Arc Productions. Toronto co-producer Dream Mill is not involved in season three, which is already in production by Xentrix.

CEO Nigel Stone says the new season will have a different look and feel, but it will remain true to the original vision of the brand. "We wanted to give it a brighter look so that viewers know it's a new series," Stone says. "I think we've achieved that and it's looking beautiful."

Since launching in 2010, Xentrix Studios has focused on servicing long-form CGI-animated TV and movies and has done work for all four major US kids channels, as well as CBeebies in the UK. It most recently helped to animate Warner Bros.' *Batman* series and the company also provides content for 4D and 5D theme park ride films.

Stone says it's his first time working with a studio in India and he's been impressed by the level of the country's production, broadcast and commercial infrastructure. "Xentrix really showed us that they understand the brand and can take it further, both in terms of animation and storytelling," he says.

To date,  $Matt\ Hatter$  has been broadcast in more than 80 countries and dubbed into 20 languages since debuting in the UK on Nicktoons and CiTV in 2011.

-Jeremy Dickson

#### NowTrending-Media

What's bubbling up in kid content culture



#### **A Cartoon Network mini-series?**

After 20 years of delivering regular episodic content to kids, Cartoon Network announced at its 2014-15 upfront presentation that it has greenlit a 10-part fantasy/comedy mini-series entitled Over the Garden Wall-its first-ever long-form event programming. Created by Pat McHale, with Cartoon Network Studios set to produce, the mini-series is expected to premiere this fall and will feature an all-star voice cast including Elijah Wood (Lord of the Rings), Collin Dean (The War at Home) and Melanie Lynskey (Two and a Half Men). It follows the adventures of two brothers, Wirt and Greg, who are trapped in a mysterious world and must find their way home with help from a wise old woodsman and a bluebird named Beatrice. Over the Garden Wall is based on Tome of the Unknown, a short film by McHale, which also features Wood and was part of Cartoon Network Studios' shorts program. It recently won the best animated short film prize at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival.

#### **More kids publishing**

On the heels of The Jim Henson Company announcing it will launch a new publishing division this fall aimed at a core girls demo, DreamWorks Animation is also jumping into the sector with DreamWorks Press. The in-house operation will publish digital and print books based on the many of the studio's popular franchises including Kung Fu Panda, Madagascar, Shrek and the upcoming B.O.O.: Bureau of Otherworldly Operations. It will also work with the DreamWorks Classics library and recently acquired Awesomeness TV. The first DreamWorks Press books are expected to rollout in time for the 2014 holiday season.

-Jeremy Dickson



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Charting a course similar to Disney Channel's hit telenovela Violetta, RCN's Chica Vampiro (Vampire Girl) has moved beyond its ratings success in Latin America to become a hit in Italy. The new 120 x 40-minute live-action series for tweens debuted on Italian 24-hour Turner kidsnet Boing! on October 31. By January, it had drawn more than one million kid viewers. Chica Vampiro bowed on Colombian terrestrial channel RCN, where it is now the most-viewed program among four to 17s in the country. With L&M opportunities in Italy and an expanding app presence, the future is looking bright for the new dramedy.

#### **On-air**



#### **Just**Launched

## Chica Vampiro

## RCN's first youth-oriented telenovela bites into new international territories

**Growth of a genre** RCN's director of international sales María Lucía Hernández says the timing is right to promote telenovelas for kids on a global scale. "The biggest limitation a few years ago was how to export the genre internationally, but now a lot of territories—especially in Southern and Eastern Europe—have realized it is a strong genre beyond LATAM. We're receiving more worldwide interest," Hernández says.

She adds that the series is unique because it melds what great telenovelas do best with a supernatural twist, special effects and music." It has strong storylines and characters and all the classic dramedy of novelas, but combines the real world with the vampire world."

Based on a story by acclaimed Argentinean author Marcela Citterio (*Ugly Duckling, Love in Custody*), *Chica Vampiro* follows 17-year-old Daisy (Colombian actress Greeicy Rendon), an ordinary girl who is forced to hide the fact that her parents are vampires. Comedic situations unfold when, after a tragic accident, she becomes a vampire herself and must find ways to keep her secret from love interest Max, played by Argentinean actor Santiago Talledo.

**Brand extensions** As RCN continues to build momentum with broadcasters, Italian agent Turner's first wave of *Chica Vampiro* consumer products is set to roll out by late 2014. The IP's first licensee, Giochi Preziosi, has signed on for a back-to-school line, while additional negotiations are in the works for publishing, music and apparel. On the digital front, the show's microsite features behind-the-scenes videos and photos, daily news, games and a karaoke section. An official *Chica Vampiro* app is also available on the App Store, Google Play and Amazon. RCN is promoting the series across TV, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and major newspapers, buses and trains in Milan and Rome

What's next With Nickelodeon LATAM set to air the second half of season one this year, and negotiations underway for a possible second season, Hernández believes the global popularity of *Chica Vampiro*, and telenovelas for kids in general, will continue to rise. "It's not unlike how Disney's *Violetta* expanded to the UK after breaking ratings records in Italy, France, Spain and Latin America." – Jeremy Dickson



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As parents
look for handson tech-toy
alternatives,
arts & craftinspired sand
play is having
something of a
moment at retail

BY GARY RUSAK

espite the freezing temps and fresh dumping of snow, it's possible to compare New York Toy Fair held at Javits Convention Center in February to a walk on the beach. The reason is simple—there was a lot of sand on the show floor. While recent Toy Fairs have been marked by the proliferation of digital displays

and touch screen technology, the 2014 edition had a decidedly more earthy feel.

"It's been very popular," says Kathy Lorkovic, editor and merchandiser for Elkhorn, Nebraska-based distributor Fat Brain Toys. "We really noticed that sand play picked up steam right before the holidays last year."

In fact, Lorkovic says Fat Brain, which distributes goods for more than 375 different toy manufacturers, including multiple lines of sand products, reported sales growth of roughly 70% in the sand category over last year.

While much ink has been spilled on the year-overyear growth of the construction category, led by Lego, perhaps the area of "organic construction" has been getting short shrift. Port Washington, New York-based retail watcher The NPD Group doesn't specifically track toy sand, but it is included as a sub-category of Outdoor and Sports Toys that saw an increase of 1% to US\$4.37 billion in 2013. The growth is notable in a year where most other categories shrank.

#### **Sensory experience**

"Kids need a break from the screen," says Krista DiBerardino, CMO of Toronto, Canada-based toyco Spin Master. "That is why we are seeing some physical play patterns making a comeback."

Moss Kardener, VP and Colorforms division manager for San Francisco, California-based University Games, agrees. He adds that the growth in sand products is a direct reaction to the glut of screens (TV, tablet and computer) in children's play diets.

"Sand is a fully sensory experience and it sparks imagination," he says. "From parents' standpoints, they are becoming more sophisticated and they know that kids have to learn to relate to more than a two-dimensional screen."

Sand play also facilitates free-form expression and helps build children's creative and social capacities. Whether it's learning to share the shovel in the sandbox, or performing their first science experiment by adding sand to water to create mud, kids' love of playing in the dirt is universal and timeless.

"It accommodates all age groups, there are no instructions, and there are no performance expectations," says Lorkovic. "A lot of products out there for kids now tend to be over-stimulating, which is why we find parents and kids are both attracted to the relaxing and stress-relieving aspects of sand."

#### **Licensed extensions**

A good indication of the growing popularity of sandbased play is the recent emergence of licensed products in the category. This summer, for example, University Games is introducing its first line of branded My Little Sandbox kits, a product developed by San Mateo, California's Be Good Company. "It's really our first licensed sandbox," notes Kardener.

The first line of My Little Sandbox licensed Nickelodeon products will feature Dora the Explorer, SpongeBob SquarePants, Bubble Guppies and Peter Rabbit-themed kits. Each includes a 10-inch x 10-inch x 2-inch colored sandbox, a 20-inch x 20-inch play mat and themed accessories, as well as ultra-fine sand, a grooming rake and a shovel. University Games will be distributing the kits through the specialty retail channel and online with a US\$24.99 price tag.

While Kardener concedes that some of the appeal of sand play lays in its open-ended characteristics, he says the licensed products are meant to give a jump-start to the traditional play pattern. "It's a starting point for creativity," he says, adding that the new licensed line was a popular attraction at the University Games booth at Toy Fair.

"Kids are looking for something to start with—the licenses make that available to them," says Kardener. "They can start with Dora or SpongeBob and then take it wherever they want."

#### It's sand—only better

Another driving factor in the sand category is the application of the popular and long-standing play pattern to a new compound that shares many properties with sand, but none of its traditional drawbacks. "Kinetic Sand is getting a lot of attention," says Lorkovic.

Fat Brain distributes the product, in association with Broomfield, Colorado-based Waba Fun, to the specialty market. Lorkovic says word-of-mouth has made the product one of its bestselling items.

The new product is 98% real sand, but a non-toxic polymer (antimicrobial, wheat and gluten-free) binding agent makes up the other 2% to create a new compound with unique properties.

It was developed by Halmstad, Sweden-based manufacturers Delta of Sweden. Spin Master recently acquired the rights for wider distribution of the compound to massmarket channels and will be placing it at Toys 'R' Us locations, among other US mass retailers, starting in June.

"Kids tell us it's like a cloud," says Spin Master's DiBerardino. "The kinetic aspect of it is you can put your hand in it and it behaves almost like flowable energy.



You can squish it and sculpt it and it never dries out. There is no mess and no fuss."

The compound will be sold in various packages and weights. A two-pound container will retail for US\$14.99.

DiBerardino points out the compound demands special packaging to fully display its unique properties. And Spin Master is working with retailers to give consumers a chance to play with the product before they take it to the check-out line. "The marketing is heavily based on the experiential aspects," she says. "There will be demos and a heavy presence on YouTube. It's hard to explain exactly what it is unless you see it and play with it."

#### **Back to basics**

While the new compound might offer a more clean-upfriendly experience, Noah McKiernan, brand manager of Little Tikes outdoor products, says it's hard to beat the real thing. "It's a play pattern that has been around forever and it's not going anywhere," he says.

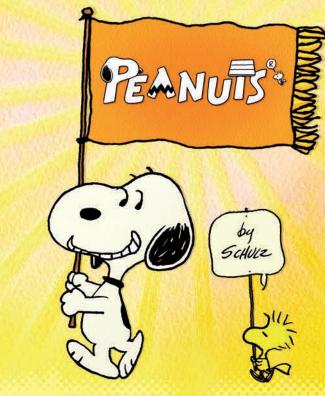
The Hudson, Ohio-based subsidiary of MGA Entertainment has been producing outdoor sandboxes (sand not included) for more than three decades, and while other categories have come and gone out of vogue, McKiernan says that the sand-play business has been steady.

 $\label{lem:company} Innovation for the company comes in terms of adding new features to already well-established products.$ 

"This year we have the Big Digger Sandbox," he says. "It has a big excavator arm that attaches to the outside of the box. It makes it more like a construction site." The set retails for US\$49.99 at Toys 'R' Us and through Little Tikes own website and various online retailers.

The key to product development, McKiernan says, is to add to the classic play-pattern without detracting from all of the positive characteristics inherent in basic sand play. "Fresh air, sunshine, learning how to cooperate with other kids, building something for the first time, you just can't beat that," he says. "It's never going to go away." •

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## Widening its wingspan

Fox plans broader CP program to take flight for sequel to 2011 hit Rio

ith the goal of building another billion-dollar franchise like Ice Age, Twentieth Century Fox is readying a far-reaching consumer products program for the follow up to 2011 samba-driven animated hit, Rio. The original's worldwide box office take of US\$484 million was a good indication that the sequel Rio 2 could support a broader consumer products program, says Roz Nowicki, EVP of global sales and retail at Fox Consumer Products.

"We made a decision to broaden the program," she says, explaining why the retail exclusives that marked the property's first foray into licensing aren't being pursued this time around. "It is a more robust program with much greater support internationally and across all product categories."

Opening across the globe April 11, Rio 2 brings back Anne Hathaway and Jesse Eisenberg to voice macaws Jewel and Blu, with the likes of Broadway musical star Kristen Chenoweth joining the cast for added box-office punch.

Malibu, California-based Jakks Pacific is on-board as master toy licensee. "With its products, Jakks is really tapping into the music in the film," says Nowicki, describing the dancing-and-singing plush that skew towards the boys aisle and hit global mass retail in late

Another notable newcomer to the program is Jay Franco. The company is producing a line of beach towels and bedding. Bentex Group is looking after apparel, while HarperCollins is publishing children's books and Trends International is producing calendars and posters. Promotional partnerships in the US include QSR giant Burger King, cosmetic company Avon and Stride Right Shoes. Additionally, there are a number of DTR deals with department stores in Brazil and Mexico.

Fox also renewed its partnership with Rovio Entertainment for a Rio-branded version of Angry Birds that will be available when the film is released.

Nowicki says the timing of the second film is fortuitous as the world's eyes increasingly turn towards the feature's setting, Rio de Janeiro, in advance of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics that are set to take place in Brazil's capital. The city's heightened global profile, combined with the awareness created by the first film, helped Fox enlist a large roster of licensees and place the program in risk-averse mass-market retailers across Latin America, North America and Europe.

"More retailers and licensees are looking for the slamdunk and guaranteed sales now," she says. "When they see something on-trend, and something that already worked well, it helps."

According to Nowicki, the program has room to grow in Asia and in the back-to-school category. And there is still time to reach those areas, as Fox strives to make Rio a perennial brand in the marketplace.

"Location-based and experiential attractions are our biggest initiatives that will allow us to bridge those gaps between feature films," Nowicki says. "Rio lends itself well to those types of experiences."

In fact, live-events partner SimEx-Iwerks Entertainment launched Rio: The 4-D Experience at the San Diego Zoo last year, and the attraction is scheduled to tour the globe throughout 2014. Rio characters are also expected to play a major role in the recently announced theme park deal between Fox and Resorts World Genting to rebrand an existing 25-acre theme park in Malaysia. The new complex is scheduled to open in 2016.

"We will follow the Ice Age pattern," she says. "This is the second movie and I think it's safe to assume that if this goes well, there will be more." -Gary Rusak



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## McFarlane Toys gets into kids licenses



McFarlane Toys designed the new Rabbids Invasion plush

odd McFarlane, the creator of Spawn and owner of McFarlane Toys, is not known for creating kids toys, but he's also not known for being risk-averse. And the result of McFarlane's first foray into the children's space in decades is an extensive line of toys, figurines, sound blasters and plush, based on the Ubisoft game and TV franchise Rabbids Invasions. The IP is marked by lovable, furry creatures with an irreverent sense of humor.

"When I saw it, I just said, 'Wow!' It was the same sort of feeling I got when I saw *Shrek*," exclaims McFarlane.

The IP has recently found success as an animated series on Nickelodeon that debuted last August and is currently stripped on the network for maximum exposure. "Ubisoft told me, 'Don't limit yourself," he says. "I was able to borrow assets from the videogame and the TV series and really make a playable product. When I make figures for Derek Jeter or Predator, the most important part is to make it deadly accurate. With this line, the accuracy isn't that complicated, it's about making them as fun to play with as possible—that is the hard part."

Aimed at kids five and up, the line will range from Rabbids Mini Figures (US\$2.99) to a Deluxe Interactive Dancing Rabbid (US\$39.99).

"Sound is also a huge part of this brand," says Mc-Farlane. "The goofy sounds and noises—the farts and the burps—are part of the overall appeal. In the future, if I have a million moms emailing me saying, 'Todd can you stop making products with sounds,' I'll know I have a runaway hit."

The products launch this month with an Easter end-cap at US Walmart stores before rolling out wider to Toys 'R' Us and other mass-market channels. McFarlane is hoping that the increased visibility of the brand through Nickelodeon, and the expectation of a bigscreen adventure, will make the Rabbids business a viable one for years to come.

"It's probably the broadest licensing deal I have had in 20 years," he says. "I've got latitude to do a lot of goofy stuff." McFarlane adds that his company is forced to make early bets on IP in order to compete with the major toycos that can jump in when a property is "fully baked."

"I'm going against Fortune-500 companies and I can't beat them at that game," he says. "They just back up the Brinks truck and walk away with all the biggest brands. My task is trying to find the diamonds in the rough." –Gary Rusak

## Hasbro brings Pop to My Little Pony

oping to keep the momentum going in its girls division, which saw a 26% sales bump and topped US\$1 billion in revenues last year, the Pawtucket, Rhode Island-based Hasbro will be extending one of its most popular girls franchises into the construction category with the My Little Pony Pop line this fall.

"The brand will enter a new category of play that lets fans create and customize their own ponies," says Samantha Lomow, SVP of global marketing. "The line is made up of easy-to-assemble figures and a playset for children to build and personalize every aspect of their pony from funky hairstyles to colorful outfits."

The entry rides both the customization and construction play trends by allowing girls to easily assemble their own ponies. The figures and play set will let kids snap on different hairstyles and outfits and other pieces of Pony flare.

The initial line of kits includes characters like Pinkie Pie, Rarity and Applejack that can be manipulated and changed with a simple pop of the connecting pieces. A single figure starts at an SRP of US\$3.99—a low entry point for the iconic IP—and is expected at all major US mass retailers this fall with a coinciding marketing push.

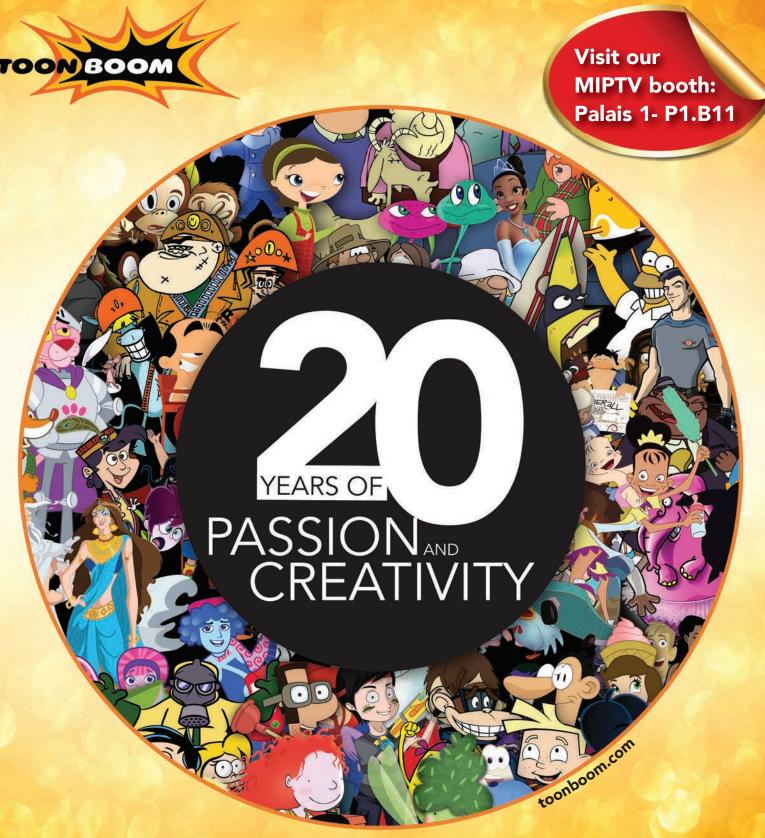
According to Lomow, a recent global research study undertaken by Hasbro entitled *Modern Girl* drove the product innovation. "We explored girls' bedrooms, closets and toy boxes to deeply understand their digital, entertainment, TV, game and toy play patterns," she says. "It really led us to create more engaging and new diverse play patterns around many of our brands, including My Little Pony."

With its traditional strength in the action-figure category, the extension represents an evolution of how Hasbro plans to facilitate play in the future. Lomow explains the company is learning to tap into the different way kids can interact with IP.

"This new expression infuses new materials, as well as elements from fashion and pop



culture, for building and personalizing, which allows for more open-ended creative and aspirational play," says Lomow. "We found that some girls want a finished doll to build stories around, while others want to create their own. The new line appeals to kids who are more of what we call 'makers'—girls who want their own creative expression." -Gary Rusak



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## Flipping out

## Jazwares crafts new multiplatform game IP with Flick-to-Stick Bungees

unrise, Florida-based Jazwares unveiled a competitive strategy game at New York Toy Fair in February—and with it, a new approach to the market. "We are now working at incubating our own brands," says Bill Graham, VP of marketing and product innovation. "We have great licensing relationships, and that is a massive part of who we are, but this is a little different approach and representative of where we want to go."

Flick-to-Stick Bungees is an original creation of Barcelona, Spain-based Magic Box International, which is best known for creating the collectible hit Gogo's Crazy Bones. Jazwares, which made its name as a licensee (most recently developing a successful line of Minecraft toys in 2013), has now partnered up to not only market and distribute the game, but also to develop an intricate backstory and content for Bungees.

At its core, Flick-to-Stick Bungees is a simple game where players aim their Bungees figurines at targets, and with a flick of a finger take aim to compete. The game has a number of different scoring variations, to further enhance competition. "The Bungees have a metallic element that adheres to different scoring spots [on the targets] and adds to the play," says Graham, explaining a unique aspect of Bungee game play.

The line includes the collectible Bungee figures, scoring discs, scoring cards and an arena. For the entry-level price of US\$3.99, consumers can buy a blind bag of Bungees, scoring cards and a disc. Product packages including multiple Bungees and the arena retail for up to US\$25. "You will be able to play the game fully with the blind bag," says Graham. "You can deepen your experience with the additional packs."

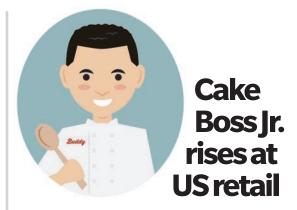
A key element of the property is the narrative and collectibility that underpins it. Each of the game's 96 Bungees are unique characters that have both human and alien elements that originated when an asteroid hit the earth millions of years ago. The story, a wide-ranging epic, where the game itself is being played to settle territorial disputes, will be delivered through online webisodes and comics that will be hosted on the product's website.

"The collectibility of the brand is key," says Graham. "The identity of each Bungee is understandable and threaded throughout the story and the game play."

The game is targeted at a core boys six to 11 demo, with the initial wave of 32 individual Bungees hitting mass retail around the globe this fall. An additional 16 Bungees are expected to be on store shelves before the end of the year, leaving 48 to be released in 2015.

A full TV marketing campaign will also support the line. "It's a leap forward for us as a company in terms of building a brand," says Graham.  $-\mathsf{Gary}$  Rusak





dult-targeted US network TLC is cooking up a brand-new line extension that will take Cake Boss products, based on the hit reality series, into the kids space for the first time. And a glance at *Cake Boss's* latest co-viewership numbers tells you exactly why.

The TLC show, which follows charismatic New Jersey-based baker Buddy Valastro and his family as they create elaborate confections, reached more than 79.8 million people—including 18.1 million US kids—last year.

To capitalize on the series' kid appeal, TLC introduced an aged-down version of the brand called Cake Boss Jr. to retailers at the 2014 International Home & Housewares Show in Chicago late last month.

"Kids love Cake Boss and the creativity that he represents," says Elizabeth Bakacs, VP of creative and merchandising at Discovery Communications, TLC's parent company.

She says that kids' attendance and enthusiasm at Buddy's many live appearances was also an indication that the younger set just can't get enough of the boisterous cake master. "There are so many kids, boys and girls, who want to grow up now and be a baker, just like Buddy," she says.

Vallejo, California-based cookware manufacturer Meyer Corporation is the first licensee on-board, and the initial Cake Boss Jr. line will consist of 25 SKUs of bakewear, including rolling pins and equipment like spoontulas that are all perfectly scaled for small hands. Items will range from US\$4.99 apiece up to US\$24.99 for full sets.

Last fall, Meyer released its initial full-sized Cake Boss bakewear (designed by Buddy) and joined a robust licensing program for the parent brand that boasts more than 400 SKUs and international distribution that includes the US, UK and Australia.

Bakacs is hoping to place the new line at retail by the fall with the same department store and mass retailers who support the adult-targeted goods.

Part of building the new extension was transforming a photo of the reality-TV star into an illustrated character that will adorn all Cake Boss Jr. packaging. While it's too early to speculate on Cake Boss Jr. content, perhaps starring an animated Buddy, Bakacs says the plan for now is for the new brand to follow the same pattern as the original one and migrate past the bakewear aisle. "We are thinking about toys, arts & crafts and activities," she says. "We are just now starting those conversations." –Gary Rusak

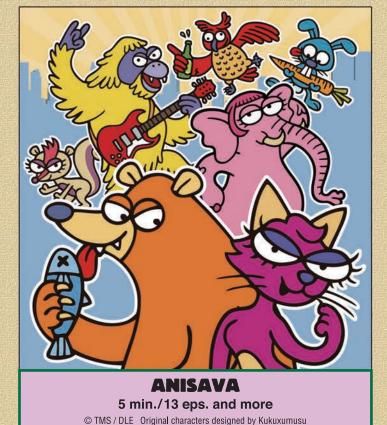




## LUPIN THE 3rd VS. DETECTIVE CONAN THE MOVIE 110 min. / Feature

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## Social climbers

NECA innovates with new tech-savvy collectible Scalers

Who Hillside, New Jersey-based NECA (National Entertainment Collectibles Association) has been in the licensed collectibles business since the mid-1990s. An old hand at manufacturing keepsakes in the areas of sports, movies, videogames, music and television, the company has established its niche by sewing up a roster of popular licenses and manufacturing high-quality products primarily targeting fanboys. At New York Toy Fair in February, there was quite a buzz around NECA's booth as the company introduced a wholly new product category—Scalers.

**What** "Essentially, Scalers are cool decorations for your cords," explains Chris Raimo, brand manager for the product. "Everyone has their iPhone earbuds and headphones while they are walking down the street, and this is a good way to be able to make them cooler."

The US\$3.99, two-inch high stylized figures simply clip on to any wayward cord. The new form of collectible is perfectly suited for this plugged-in generation of kids hungry for new ways to show their fan loyalty. "Most people just have their collectible figures sit on their desk and collect dust," says Raimo. "This way you can take it with you."

NECA has sewed up a number of licenses for the new category that will skew a bit younger than their usual hardcore

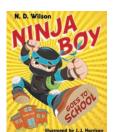
fanboy demographic. "The Marvel and DC licenses were huge for us," he says. "The designs are a morphed style that appeals to younger fans." The first wave of figures will include Iron Man, Spider-Man, Batman and The Joker will ship to US-based specialty retailers in the coming months.

What's next After the success of Toy Fair, Raimo says NECA is already looking into ways to grow the line in a number of different directions. "You can expect more characters from Marvel and DC for sure," he says. "We want to get to the characters that are a little deeper in the universe. The ones that the fans know but others might not."

He adds that there could be further innovation in terms the sizing of the figures and other aspects of the new product. "We are always thinking of ways to add value to our collectibles," he says. Additionally, NECA is constantly on the lookout for new licenses suited to a Scalers treatment. "This is an original idea, and we are the go-to-guys, so we are going to try and hit as many licenses as we can for it."

**Contact** Chris Raimo, brand manager Scalers, NECA (906-686-3300 ext. 241, chrisr@necaonline.com).

-Gary Rusak



## **Book**Bet

## N.D. Wilson's Ninja Boy Goes to School

Bestselling author N. D. Wilson brings his own particular brand of wackiness to his picture-book debut *Ninja Boy Goes to School*. The 32-page effort being published by Random House Kids will hit US bookstores July 8. The hardcover has an SRP of US\$16.99, while the eBook will be made available for US\$10.99. Featuring colorful and dynamic illustrations by J.J. Harrison, the story follows the titular character in his attempts to meld the ancient art of the Ninja with the everyday challenges of being in kindergarten. –Gary Rusak













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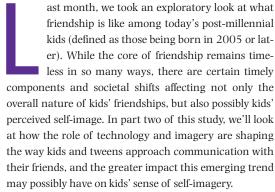


## **Picture this**

Nick explores how technology and imagery are shaping the way kids communicate with friends



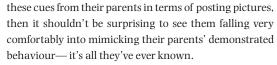
BY ERIN MILLER



We all know the term "a picture is worth a thousand words," and today, that's never been more true. Thanks to the emergence of apps, tools, and platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, emojis, and memes, communication through visual imagery has never been more relevant for kids and tweens. Kids can express their thoughts, emotions-and what they're doing at any particular moment—all by simply snapping a picture. Kids are literally documenting their everyday lives through pictures, and sharing their captured moments with friends and peers, with no typing required. Emoji icons are also more popular than ever, being a quick, easy and fun way to communicate emotions. For example, we see kids simply sending a "smiley face," "sad face" or "confused face" to communicate what they're feeling as an alternative to typing out the words.

As Nickelodeon monitors this evolving trend, we'd be remiss not to acknowledge how this heightened appeal of imagery is potentially affecting kids' and tweens' sense of self.

Kids and tweens were born into a world where Facebook has always existed—and their parents have been documenting their lives through pictures on the social platform from the day they were born. As they get older, kids and tweens are coming to understand that not only does every picture of every moment count, but also that pictures have to be just right before their parents put them on display. If we're to assume that kids are taking



Today's kids and tweens are living in a "selfie" culture. Their friends and peers are taking and sharing them, and the trend has even become second nature for many of today's popular celebrities. Not only are kids in full control of the pictures they're taking of themselves, but they also have the tools to alter, enhance and filter pictures at the touch of a button. This isn't just about perfection, but more about trying on different personalities through their self-portraits. There are still a lot of questions surrounding how this trend will fully impact younger kids, and in particular, what this may mean for their perception of self-image.

In many ways, this trend still feels older. The selfie phenomenon is driven by teens, which makes sense given that teens are characteristically narcissistic; it's a timeless developmental theme of teens as they're continuously looking to identify who they are. In recent years, we've seen the onset of narcissistic behavior trickle down to tweens, so it's only fair that we continue to keep a close eye on whether or not this behavior will trickle down to even younger kids and what that could mean for them.

This concludes our deep dive into kids and friendship. Next month's Kaleidoscope will examine what's happening with today's families and hone in on some significant changes that have taken place within the last few years.

#### For more information, contact Kaleidoscope@nick.com

(Source: Nickelodeon Group Consumer Insights Research, "The Buzz" Quarterly Trend Report, February 2014)

A major focus of the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family is to live and breathe kid culture. We continually track and identify trends, and explore what it means to be a kid and teen today. In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumer, we've created the Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.



## Muse of the Month

## Going the distance

## New York teenager and role model Kat inspires girls to dream big



at, a 13-year-old from the South Bronx, loves spending time relaxing to music, laughing at viral videos, hanging out with friends, and pursuing her passion of becoming a lawyer. "My grandma didn't make it to high school because she had my mom. My mom didn't make it to college because she had me and my sister. I want to go further and finish college and become a lawyer. I love to argue for my beliefs and help others. I get a lot of practice during debate club."

When Kat's not debating, she can be found mentoring kindergarten students. She is a positive influence for the girls because she is a role model that they can relate to—young, ambitious and a minority. "The girls play with Barbies and watch TV shows with princesses and they think, 'Is this what I am supposed to look and act like?' This is not what real girls should strive for, especially young girls."

Kat thinks it's important to remind the girls that they are smart and beautiful just the way they are. And she continues to try to inspire them to think big about their dreams, encouraging the girls to pursue their passions. She wants them to dream big, just like she does.

Catching the tail end of the millennial generation, Kat is not atypical in her idealism and conviction. However, she feels a void when it comes to TV characters that reflect this part of herself. For example, while Rachel Berry on Glee is very driven, she is also extremely self-absorbed, and success comes very easily to her. Kat craves seeing the struggles of her role models, not just the triumphs. – Amanda Rosenburg



insight Insight Kids is a research and strategic consulting company dedicated to catalyzing our clients to build innovative, impactful and inspiring experiences for kids and families. To be further inspired by Noémie and Insight Kids, visit www.insightstrategygroup.com/insightkids/.

## Cool or Not? The gaming app vs. console game edition



**Candy Crush** Saga

<b>Boys 8 to 11</b> (232)	<b>Girls 8 to 11</b> (246)	<b>Boys 12 to 15</b> (230)	<b>Girls 12 to 15</b> (243)		<b>Boys 8 to 11</b> (246)	<b>Girls</b> <b>8 to 11</b> (224)	<b>Boys 12 to 15</b> (168)	<b>Girls 12 to 15</b> (140)
37.9%	50.4%	18.7%	34.6%	Totally way cool *	45.5%	42.9%	16.1%	18.6%
17.7%	18.7%	13.5%	21.4%	Very cool *	18.3%	22.3%	6.0%	10.7%
26.7%	17.9%	30.4%	23.9%	Kinda cool *	20.3%	20.5%	25.6%	35.7%
7.3%	6.9%	13.9%	10.7%	Not cool *	8.5%	6.3%	23.2%	17.1%
10.3%	6.1%	23.5%	9.5%	Totally un-cool *	7.3%	8.0%	29.2%	17.9%
13.4%	8.2%	13.9%	11.3%	Don't know what it is	8.2%	16.7%	37.5%	48.5%



**Disney Infinity** 

\* Excludes "Don't know what it is" responses



Cool or Not? is part of KidSay's Year End 2013 Trend Tracker. These one-of-a-kind research reports are published 10 times a year and provide a quantitative and qualitative picture of kids' likes, dislikes and trends gathered through in-school surveys with US kids ages five to 15. Contact Bob Reynolds (913-390-8110 or bob@kidsay.com).



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It seems like every week there is a new kid-targeted SVOD platform challenging trailblazer Netflix with its own novel spin. We're keeping track of what newcomers and seasoned players are up to.

BY WENDY GOLDMAN GETZLER

ever underestimate the power of choice, especially when it comes to kids. Tablet infiltration and a penchant for binge viewing are driving new viewing patterns among kids and teens. And a number of new subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) services are set to give US market leader Netflix (and its Just for Kids brand) a run for its money. According to The NPD Group, Netflix's exclusive hold on the US streaming market dropped from 76% in 2012 to 67% in 2013. Meanwhile, in the UK, 10% of three- to four-year-olds are using a tablet while at home, which has content developers excited about the prospects of putting shows into the palms of the littlest of hands.

But there's a lot kid-specific SVODs have to consider. New York-based No Crusts Interactive CEO Carla Fisher, who develops digital experiences for kids, outlines the vital code of conduct for the best children's streaming services. It includes providing a walled garden of high-quality content for the child to roam freely, offering personalization, providing basic parental control tools, sporting a kid-friendly interface and carefully collecting user data to continually improve the product. With that in mind, we're providing an overview of the biggest—or perhaps the most interesting—players in today's everproliferating kids SVOD market.

**Amazon Prime Instant Video** Amazon and its UK-based SVOD service LoveFilm—which is now set to be rebranded and combined with the Amazon Prime service—remains the largest competitor to Netflix with more than 41,000 movies and TV episodes in its library. Fueling the rivalry was Amazon's major coup of scoring content from Nick Ir. and Nickelodeon last June,

just a month after Netflix let its long-standing deal with Nick parentco Viacom



Content includes: Amazon has differentiated itself with its popular pilot program approach that it uses to help determine original programming for kids. Last spring's inaugural pilot season resulted in the production of three children's series Annesdroids, Creative Galaxy and Tumble Leaf.

**batteryPOP** Launched by former Nickelodeon vets in November, the New York-based startup is a free online and mobile network that offers shortform content in a safe online environment. It is currently available for streaming

Content includes: batteryPOP features original (Chew On That, What's Poppin'), acquired (Totally Random, Cody the Dinosaur), and branded content including cartoons and live-action shows, exclusive celebrity interviews, multi-lingual programming, science and math series, videogame tutorials and music videos. MondoTV animated series ANTS, live-action series This is Daniel Cook and The Amazing Professor Ambrosius from Band Content Distribution will also be available soon.

across computers, tablets and smartphones. Kids also help determine what types of shows launch on the platform through a voting process.



**Hopster** Founded by former Viacom exec Nick Walters and backed by ex-Nickelodeon UK MD Howard Litton and Skype/LoveFilm advisor Peter Read, Hopster launched in the UK late last year as an on-demand TV channel embodied in a single app that delivers preschool shows and accompanying learning games.



Content includes: Babar and the Adventures of Badou, Max & Ruby and Maggie & The Ferocious Beast from Nelvana; SuperWhyl, Madeline, Paddington Bear and Monster Math Squad from DHX Media; and 64 Zoo Lane, Pablo the Little Red Fox and Louie from Millimages. The non-exclusive licensing deals comprised roughly 800 episodes at Hopster's launch.

**Hulu** The US-based streaming service reached US\$1 billion in revenue in 2013, up from US\$695 million the year before. The service has been busy building its Hulu Kids hub offering and original first-run TV programming strategy. Hulu's library currently consists of 2,900 TV series and 68,000 hours of video.



**Content includes:** The Jim Henson Company recently gave ad-free Hulu Plus the rights to more Jim Henson Family titles than any other service in the US. *Sesame Street* (Sesame Workshop), *Thomas & Friends* (HIT Entertainment), and Zodiak Kids' *Horrid Henry* and *Waybuloo* are also available on the service.

**Kidobi** Launched back in 2011, the Canadian startup offers a streaming web platform and TV iPad app that aggregates personalized educational

Content includes: Recent deals include an exclusive partnership with fellow Canuck Mark Animation for new short-form Mandarin-English preschool series *Miaomiao*. BRB Internacional entered into a content partnership with Kidobi to make more than 40 hours of its preschool programming available.

video content. Parents organize video playlists that are sorted by category and age group.



**Kidoodle.TV** Launched by Calgary, Canada-based Parent Media Co. last summer, Kidoodle is a kids SVOD service that features many child-safety features, including customizable kid profiles.

**Content includes:** The OTT platform's catalogue currently holds more than 5,000 episodes of programming including *My Little Pony, Inspector Gadget, Rastamouse* and content from National Geographic.



**Netflix Just for Kids** The American-bred SVOD giant is currently accessible to subscribers in North and South America, the Caribbean and parts of Europe. As of September 2013, Netflix had a global stream-

ing subscription base of roughly 44 million, more than 33 million of whom reside in the US.



Content includes: In December, Netflix launched its first original kids program offering with *Turbo: FAST*. Licensed newcomers include four original serialized Marvel live-action shows plus a mini-series event, 300 hours of original programming from DreamWorks Animation and a range of Scholastic Media television programs and movies. Netflix members in the UK and Ireland recently got some Cartoon Network and Cartoonito content, too.

**PlayKids TV** From Latin America's largest mobile content platform Movile comes the SVOD app for iOS and Android devices. The US\$9.99 per month service is growing its presence in the Americas to more than 20 countries across Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia. The PlayKids TV interface also features preschool-appropriate navigation instructions and games.

**Content includes:** Partners include DHX Media, PBS and The Jim Henson Company for series such as Animal Mechanicals, Caillou, Super Why!, Sid the Science Kid, Rob the Robot and Care Bears.



**Toon Goggles** Available on web, OTT, mobile and tablet platforms including Samsung Smart TVs in Europe, Roku in the US, Canada, UK and Ireland, as well as the new Polaroid kids tablet, Toon Goggles is a free-mium online kids TV channel that offers shows and games. Additionally, animators can publish content on the Toon Goggles site for free.

#### **Content includes:**

Newcomes include *Dukes* of *Broxstonia* and *Horace in Slow Motion* from distributor The Australian Children's Television Foundation, as well as *Gormiti* and *Yoohoo* & *Friends*.



**Viddiverse** The video social network, which headed into beta in February, allows pre-YouTubers the ability to watch videos in a COPPA-compliant environment that also encourages them to upload and record their own videos and edit them in Viddiverse's studio. The service has the most social networking elements than other streaming TV competitors.

**Content includes:** The New York-based company has so far licensed more than 100 hours of content from partners including Nelvana Enterprises, Shaftesbury, Smoke Bomb Entertainment, Distribution 360, GINX TV and Zodiak Kids.





#### **New Kid** in Town

## Making a run for it

Germany's Honig Studios is taking on the kids app space with the help of Kickstarter and its first children's property Milli Visualizing the market For Berlin, Germany-based Honig Studios, it took a snail to get things moving. The four-year-old multiplatform media development studio rose to prominence after developing the online component to European crime series *The Sprial*. It's now making waves in the children's interactive space thanks to *Milli*, an original children's iOS and Android book app that revolves around the adventures of a curious snail. The app's Eric Carle-like illustrations, created by Germany's Academy of Children's Media student Jana Schell, were digitally adapted by Honig with both children's

physical books and a TV series in mind. "Developing for kids means it is really important to understand patience level. Many children's apps are very descriptive with instructions, but *Milli* offers exploration that's more open-ended," says Jiannis Sotiropoulos, one of the eight-person shop's four co-founders. "We're seeing that kids put their own meanings to images and respond to abstract art well."

**Kick-off** What remains concrete are Honig's plans to promote *Milli* via its first Kickstarter campaign—a process that's proven to be surprisingly, well, sluggish. "By achieving roughly 20% of our goal with two weeks to go, it's been a relatively slow process. But Kickstarter offers a way to find out what the audience says. It's as much a method of crowdsourcing as it is crowdfunding," says Sotiropoulos. "Through the process, we've received valuable feedback that we are applying." For example, the company still doesn't know how much the app will cost, so consumer response is helping to determine pricing. Sotiropoulos also says people noticed that the faces of certain characters were hidden in some illustrations, so the studio immediately made alterations to the designs. Naturally, the Kickstarter campaign is also meant to drive project funding, 85% of which it had already received from German government bodies. The company needs an additional 15% in order to add music, sounds and overall finely tuned features to the app before its anticipated launch this summer.

Going forward Honig is already looking at what the future will look like for *Milli*. The company is in the midst of speaking with international broadcasters regarding a TV series and is hammering out further logistical details surrounding show length and style. The company is also currently working with three more children's book authors to adapt new properties into apps. Honig is making a wilful effort to build its profile within the German children's app community—one that Sotiropoulos says is considerably small compared to other European markets. "In London, children's app development is vibrant. German publishers have moved to kids apps, but they haven't been overly successful in terms of visuals," he says. "Our feeling is that illustrated books for kids are masterpieces, and kids apps rarely reach this level of impact. That's what we want to change with Milli." –Wendy Goldman Getzler

## **The Digits**

Numbers that speak volumes about kids and technology

Societal norms: The average US teen has 300

## Facebook friends

and 70 Turitter fellows

(Pew Internet)

More than

## 200 million

people now use Facebook-owned WhatsApp regularly, a 175% jump over last year...

(GlobalWebIndex)



Photo: Sacks0

...And by 2018, instant messaging apps will make up

75% of global mobile messaging traffic—or 63 trillion messages

(Juniper Research)

More than of UK children have used an online social network by the time they reach their 10th birthday

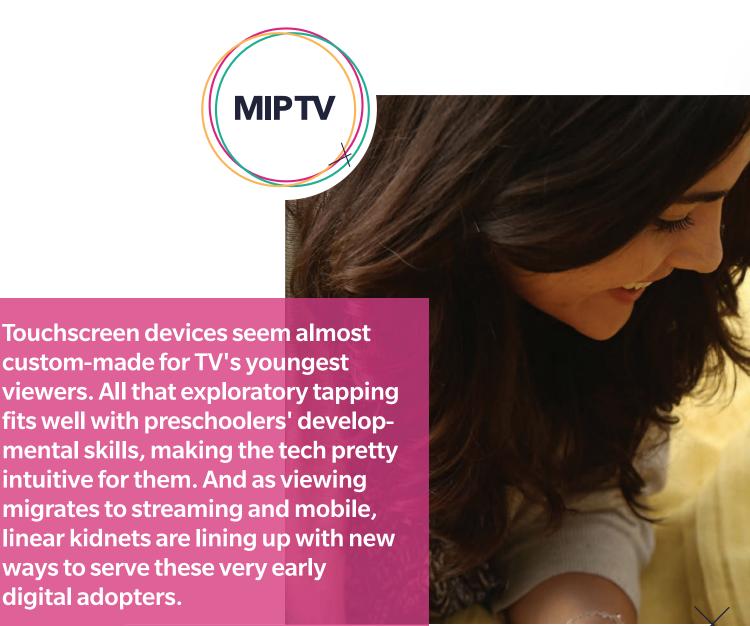
 $({\sf Knowthenet}\,{\sf Social}\,{\sf Age}\,{\sf report})$ 



Sony's PS4 earned the title of the bestselling

console

**in the US this past January** (The NPD Group)



BY JEREMY DICKSON

ccording to a 2013 study by the Georgia Institute of Technology, more than 90% of young people are considered to be digital natives in the developed world, a statistic not lost on major US kidnets Nickelodeon, Disney Channel and Sprout. In their efforts to offer the best, most accessible content to tech-savvy kids, wherever and whenever they want it, all three broadcasters have recently launched new innovative streaming-based services aimed to educate and entertain their youngest viewers.

It's a clear sign of the times, given the impact SVOD services like Netflix have had on more traditional linear television. But despite all the talk of how SVOD services potentially breed cable-cutters and cannibalize linear ratings, traditional TV remains on top. Metrics guru Nielsen's December 2013 cross-platform report on global media consumption patterns found that traditional TV is the most-consumed form of media among all demographics.

And with TV holding strong as the top destination for viewing, kidnets are seeing the new multiplatform landscape as a prime space to offer highly measurable, non-linear extensions and original IP designed to complement linear programming. While the nets are certainly going to great lengths to establish a non-linear presence with core six to 11 viewers, the interesting thing is that much of their effort in the SVOD and app space is focused on preschool programming. A smart move considering the percentage of US kids under two who used a mobile device in 2013 rose to 38% from 10% in 2011, according to research firm Common Sense Media's 2013 report, Zero to Eight: Children's Media Use in America.

Beyond the affinity preschoolers have for tablets and smartphones, Gary Pope suggests another reason why broadcasters might be interested in appealing to the demo in this way. The childhood development expert and co-founder of UK-based family research and branding



agency, Kid Industries, contends that kidnets have a lot to gain by thinking differently when it comes to digital. He says digital-first experiences for preschoolers, if well executed, could be more beneficial when it comes to gaining and retaining new viewers as they grow older.

"If a viewer has a good learning experience that is playful and emotive, and solidifies a memory that he or she is able to recall, then it's much more advantageous for companies to gain a customer through an interaction rather than the passive viewing of linear TV," says Pope. "It gives kids much more connectedness to the content."

**Personalized TV** To that end, almost a year since it introduced the free interactive *Nick App*, which has amassed more than eight million downloads globally since its US debut in February 2013, Nickelodeon turned its attention to preschoolers and unveiled My Nick Junior. The commercial-free, interactive VOD channel is inspired by the Netflixes of the world and personalized media services like Pandora.

First launched in 2012 on CanalSat in France, the platform is now available to more than two million Virgin Media TiVo homes in the UK, to Verizon FiOS customers in the US, and advanced discussions are underway between Nick and five more international partners across three continents.

The hybrid experience, which features both scheduled programming and on-demand options, lets parents customize video playlists for their preschool child and curate titles according to developmental themes such as "science and nature," "creativity," and "problem solving." Preschoolers can also rate their favorite episodes. My Nick Junior then "learns" the child's preferences and programs accordingly, choosing from a library that features 650 episodes of Nick Jr. series.

According to Pier Gazzolo, COO of Viacom International Media Networks, the model was test-driven in France in August 2012. As of October 2013, more than 600,000 episodes were viewed per month, and by January this year, users had created more than 120,000 personalized channels.

More importantly, Gazzolo says My Nick Junior didn't cannibalize Nick Jr.'s French linear channel. "We continue to grow our ratings. Viewers are watching on the linear channels, then going to My Nick Junior, then switching back to linear to watch more," says Gazzolo. "It actually complements more than it cannibalizes, and is a great way to connect parents with their kids."

Nickelodeon Group president Cyma Zarghami says staying on top of digital trends is something the network can't afford to ignore, despite the fact that 95% of all preschool viewing in the US still takes place via linear TV.

"Television is where we've been able to build our brand equity and trust with the audience, but at the same time we don't want to be caught not knowing where the audience is going, which is why we are building best-inclass platforms," says Zarghami.

"When and if the day comes where there is a true shift in the viewership, then we will have as much equity and quality in both places as we possibly can."

Further growing its digital footprint, Nickelodeon is releasing the long-awaited *Nick Jr. App* in the US this spring as a free, live-streaming branded platform for iPads. Its launch will coincide with the debut of more than 100 hours of new preschool content for Nick's 2014/15 preschool slate, including *Dora* spinoff *Dora and Friends* and STEM curriculum-based *Blaze and the Monster Machines*.

The ad-supported app, according to Nickelodeon Group SVP of Nick Digital, Matthew Evans, features live-streaming of network shows, educational activities, short-form videos and a unique function that lets characters like Dora the Explorer and Twist from *The Fresh Beat Band* respond to users through tap interactions. Full-length on-demand episodes and the linear feed of Nick Jr. can also be accessed by households that subscribe to a TV service package with Nick and any one of its 18 distributors. Evans says it is not a re-skin of

## "It's much more advantageous for companies to gain a customer through an interaction rather than the passive viewing of TV."

—Gary Pope, Kid Industries

the *Nick App* and was developed specifically for preschoolers as the primary users, as opposed to My Nick Junior, which is more of a parent-driven platform.

"We're giving kids the opportunity to feel empowered through guided exploration and engagement with the Nick preschool characters that they love," says Evans.

**Digesting digital-first** Meanwhile, staying focused on the SVOD revolution has been top-of-mind for Nick rival Disney, but the Mouse House has opted for a slightly different preschool strategy.

Recognizing the explosion of mobile device usage by preschoolers, Disney decided to launch its brandnew original animated preschool series *Sheriff Callie's Wild West* on its *WATCH Disney Junior* app last November, a full two months before premiering the show on its US Disney Junior block and channel in January.

The app-launch strategy, a first for Disney, was risky but it paid off. *Sheriff Callie*'s television debut drew record



ratings and was the top-ranked show in its time period across all preschool demos. The series also generated more than 23 million video views via the *WATCH Disney Junior* iOS app between November and January.

"We had a lot of conversations about whether or not we should even try this type of launch, and there was a lot of talk about cannibalization of content, but we just didn't see that," says Lauren DeVillier, VP of digital media for Disney Channels Worldwide.

She attributes the launch's success to a combination of factors—including the quality of the show's stories and characters and Disney's use of short-form teasers to introduce kids to *Sheriff Callie*'s cast before making full episodes available on the app.

"The WATCH apps stand up to all of the other distribution portals based on their content alone. When you look at Hulu and Netflix, it is the content that people are attracted to. Our apps are only as good as the content inside of them," contends DeVillier. She adds that the tricky part of promoting a digital-first show is managing the plethora of media access points consumers use today. "We had to be really clear about messaging. In addition, the concept of WATCH is still really new. We still have a lot to do in educating consumers on what it is and how to get it."

Launched in 2012, Disney's suite of WATCH apps for Disney Channel, Disney XD, Disney Junior and ABC allow authenticated Comcast cable subscribers to access top Disney series live and on-demand anywhere they want. To date, they have generated a whopping 1.5 billion video views, but DeVillier says linear still leads the pack. "We're always driving back to the network because it is the primary touchpoint," she says.

Even with this first success, DeVillier wouldn't reveal whether or not Disney has any short- or long-term plans to launch any more original preschool shows via the app-first route. "We talk about it and look at each project individually. Digital is such an integral part of the overall strategy for what we do with our shows now," she says.

Case in point is the *Disney Junior Appisodes* app for iOS devices, which lets kids interact with various activities embedded into episodes of select Disney Junior shows like *Doc Mc Stuffins*, *Sofia the First*, *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* and *Jake and the Never Land Pirates*. Since launching in 2012, the app continues to resonate with consumers. In December 2013, a total of 11 of the top 50 grossing kids apps for iOS were based on Disney properties (*Disney Junior Appisodes* included), according to digital analytics firm App Annie. "For us, launching *Appisodes* was a natural evolution of getting kids really engaged in the stories and being able to move narratives forward," says DeVillier.

While Disney continues to dip its toes into the digital-first space for preschool, Nickelodeon's approach has been to premiere new preschool programs to its built-in TV audience first. "The idea that we would introduce content to eight million homes, when we have 95 million homes to do it with, is counter-intuitive to the business we're in. As long as the TV platform [for preschool] is bigger than the digital platforms,

we'll continue to use the TV channel as our mother ship to introduce content, and then migrate to digital," says Zarghami.

Nick did premiere Wallykazam!, the kidnet's first preschool series with an embedded literacy curriculum, as a free download on the US iTunes store a week before bowing the program on its Nick Junior block in early February. However, Zarghami says the decision was part of

a coordinated marketing campaign, not an overarching business strategy.

"On special occasions, if we do believe there is an appetite to put more content in one place than another to experiment or drive the audience to digital, then we can do that," Zarghami says. "We have some great ideas about extended content that could go on the *Nick Jr. App* that would be exclusive offshoots of the content we have for TV."

For My Nick Junior, Gazollo says there are no current plans to launch digital-first content. "If we and our partners reach a place where we both feel it would be beneficial to launch new content there first, we might consider it, but that has not been part of the plan so far," he says.

## Flipping the model As

Disney and Nickelodeon continue to evolve multiplatform preschool strategies, 24-hour US preschool net Sprout has been blurring the lines between linear and digital for nine years. It launched as a VOD channel before taking to traditional airwaves. "Launching on VOD first was a very good indication of us being prepared for where we are

today, on every screen wherever kids can access us," says Andrew Beecham, Sprout SVP of programming.

"Our linear service, which is all about short-form content, is still the key because it is the only place where you get the full Sprout experience from our signature blocks. But VOD is fantastic for kids who need a deeper experience and may want to watch multiple 30-minute episodes."



Further expanding its on-the-go digital reach, the network recently launched *Sprout Now*, a web-streaming app that gives its authenticated channel subscribers access to content on multiple platforms and is part of cable giant (and Sprout owner) Comcast's ongoing TV Everywhere initiative.

Among the app's current features are almost all of Sprout's linear content (including originals like *The Chica Show* and third-party series such as *Sesame Street*), a simple-to-use, icon-driven interface, and a tool for creating user favorites lists.

Sprout Now adds to the network's growing library of apps, which helps drive eyeballs to Sprout's linear and web services. "We are very good about leading our viewers from one platform to the next. We have the same programming on all of our destinations, but it's packaged in different ways to suit what kids and parents are doing at key times of the day," says Beecham.

As for launching new digital-first preschool original series, Sprout is taking an inventive approach that falls somewhere between the mindsets of Disney and Nickelodeon.

The channel, which is in the midst of transitioning its linear service to an originals-driven slate, is using the digital-first approach to test new short-form appisodes that could potentially be turned into long-form commissions.

Enter *Edison the Invention Detective*. Created by New York-based interactive media company yummico, and produced in partnership with DHX Media, the new 11-minute

appisode series follows the adventures of Edison, a young girl inventor who loves to solve mysteries.

"We believe this is the first time an appisode is being used by a US broadcaster as a low-cost alternative to traditional TV pilot development," says yummico co-founder Traci Paige Johnson of *Blue's Clues* fame. (When asked if Disney would consider creating original appisodes for pilot development, DeVillier says it plans to stick to appisodes based on its iconic brands. "We have no current plans to do this, but we are always looking at innovative new ideas," she says.)

With Sprout's first *Edison* appisode set for an April launch to kick off a period of public and internal evaluation, the channel is also readying its new original series *Ruff-Ruff, Tweet & Dave*, a preschool game show that encourages viewers to play along on a tablet or smartphone. A reward system for answering questions correctly and for coming back to the program is a key feature, along with the series' audio watermarking technology. "It's a great way of extending the video experience," says Beecham.

Assessing the new landscape, Johnson expects the wave of new streaming platforms and digital products aimed at preschoolers to continue to swell. "The next five years will be telling as the seeds of digital-first and subscription models on tablets grow into bigger trees," she says. "Anything can happen, which is exciting and nerve wracking, but you have to keep making things with heart that speak to kids and parents, and the best will rise to the top." \(\mathbb{O}\)

# MIPTV

## With great power...



Disney's new spacethemed series Miles from Tomorrowland aims to influence children's interests in science and technology

As new one-stop-shop streaming platforms and STEM-based children's programs aim to tap into the developmental aspects of kids who are becoming adept at using technology at younger ages, it's interesting to think about how today's digital natives are going to be using tomorrow's digital tools.

And while we know *Minecraft*-loving boys and girls as young as five are now learning how to code and use 3D printers, the onus on content creators and manufacturers to produce quality, research-based properties for preschool-age kids has never been greater.

A recent study by Touchstone Research and Kid Bunch found 90% of kids believe STEM learning subjects are very important today, but according to the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, just 39% of US parents say their child has learned "a lot" about any subject from mobile devices, compared to 52% for TVs—a telling sign for producers looking to launch multiplatform educational properties for preschoolers.

Over the next two years, series including the upcoming female-led science-based *Thomas Edison's Secret Lab* from Genius Brands and Disney Junior's space-themed preschool series *Miles from Tomorrowland* are among a slew of new STEM-inspired programs expected to teach educational concepts to kids in new ways that are simple and fun.

But will preschoolers really learn from these shows in the ways producers intend, and how will that learning be measured?

According to Gary Pope, co-founder of UK-based family research and branding agency Kid Industries, consumers need to be extra mindful of the educational content they present to their children as the market becomes more saturated.

"A parent can think a piece of content is right for their child because the brand is trusted, when the reality is it might not be appropriate," says Pope.

"I see content from everybody that gets out the door because it is good enough and will maintain a particular content, commercial, or licensing strategy. The fact is we are all in the job of making great things for kids and they should come first. Sometimes they don't."

Pope is all for iPad experiences, so long as the stories are good. "I would argue there is nothing new in STEM. The curriculum has always been there. At the end of the day, kids just want to watch a good story"



BY LANA CASTLEMAN



**Concept** Based on the book series Bing Bunny by Ted Dewan, this new TV series focuses on the everyday life of cute little three-year-old rabbit Bing. And each seven-minute ep plays out as a micro-drama that depicts the real struggles faced by all preschoolers as they learn how to master their physical and socialemotional environments. Acamar CEO Mikael Sheilds says his team employed "an army" of educational consultants to make sure the storytelling was authentic and relatable to its target audience. So when Bing gets rushed into something and his plans unravel, or gets upset when he doesn't understand something, or reacts to how grown-ups deal with him, his viewers will be right there with him. On the L&M front, HarperCollins UK is already on-board for TV tie-in books with agency TLC repping the property.

## **Bing**

Co-producers Acamar Films, Tandem Films (both London), Brown Bag Films (Ireland)

**Style** CGI animation

Format 78 x seven minutes

**Budget** US\$16.7 million

Status With a presale to UK pubcaster CBeebies in-hand, all writing is complete and the series is now in production.

**Delivery** Mid 2014



**Concept** This *Sesame Street*-inspired series is a first for UK pubcaster CBeebies' in-house production arm, where its studio in Salford is currently awash with Muppets. In this uniquely British show, we find *Sesame* regulars Elmo and Cookie Monster taking up residence at a small UK-based hotel owned and operated by Elmo's aunt Funella Furchester, who's joined by husband Furgus Fuzz and their daughter Phoebe. While Elmo puts his problem-solving skills to work to help his relatives meet the needs of The Furchester's eclectic clientele, clutzy Cookie lands his dream job as the hotel's room service waiter. That surely won't cause a few comic mishaps, will it? Expect a lot of slapstick, humor and heart from this one.

#### **The Furchester Hotel**

Co-producers Sesame Workshop (US), CBeebies (UK)
Style Live-action puppetry
Format 52 x 11 minutes
Budget US\$285,000/half hour
Status In production
Delivery Fall 2014

#### **K3**

**Producer** Studio 100 Animation (Paris)

Style 2D animation

Format 52 x 13 minutes

**Budget** US\$7.65 million

**Status** With French broadcaster m6 on-board, the series has just moved into production.

**Delivery** 2015



**Concept** Kim, Kylie and Kate are three ordinary friends who find themselves in an extraordinary world, touring the globe as teen pop-singing sensation K3, where just about anything can happen. With their long-suffering chauffeur by their side, the group never knows what the next day will bring, but one thing's for certain, it can't say no to adventure. Saving an orphanage from a property developer, exposing the identities of notorious jewel thieves and protecting a shy lake monster from evil hunters are just a few of the things on the menu. K3 always manages, however, to make it to their concerts on time and to triumph with a positive attitude and a catchy song.



Concept With what GO-N CEO Eric Garnet describes as a "very simple and silly" idea as its foundation, screwball comedy Zip Zip is sure to yield a lot of laughs. At the center of the plot we find a fox, two wild boars and a black bird that are just tired of living handto-mouth in the wilderness. They crave the creature comforts only the lush suburbs can deliver and decide to don zip-up costumes to disguise themselves as run-of-the-mill house pets. The group manages to find a home with a young animal-loving couple, which happens to already own a domestic cat, Victoria. She rules the household like her own personal kingdom. Obviously, this is the first wrinkle in the Zip Zip crew's scheme. In each episode, you can count on the wild animals' natural instincts to surface at inopportune times, driving the gags and story suspense.

Producer GO-N (France)

Style 2D digital animation

Format 52 x 11 minutes

Budget US\$300,000/halfhour

Status With pre-buys from Germany's Super RTL and France Télévisions, and scripts edited by L.A.-based Cynthia True (creator of Nick's The Mighty B), the series will have an 11-minute pilot complete for MIPTV and is in full production.

**Delivery** Summer 2014



#### **Talking Tom** and Friends

Co-producers BRB Internacional (Spain), Outfit7 (Cypress)

Style CGI animation

Format 52 x 11 minutes, plus 26 webisodes

**Budget US\$7.1 million** 

Status In development, working on scripting, with a full trailer to be completed by MIPTV

**Delivery** Fall 2015



the kitchen, naturally.



What kind of asshole steals someone's unicycle?! We're all getting out of the habit of waiting. I don't think the burp is quite loud enough, can we tweak it? I can think of worse things to do for a living.

It's kind of like a preschool puppet

## Fawlty Towers.

- Disney's **Mike Moon** on the theft of his beloved unicycle from the front of his house last year
- CBBC's **Sarah Muller** noting how SVOD platforms have changed the way people watch episodic dramas
- Toymaker **Todd McFarlane** discusses the development process for his company's new Rabbids Invasion line
- Terry Fitzpatrick, from Sesame Workshop, describing the new Sesame/CBeebies co-pro The Furchester Hotel

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